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THE WORKS
OF NIKOLAY GOGOL

I

DEAD SOULS

VCL. I

Translated by Constance Garnett

THE TALES OF ANTON TCHEHOV

- I. THE DARLING, &c.
- II. THE DUEL, &c.
- III. THE LADY WITH THE DOG, &c.
- IV. THE PARTY, &c.
- V. THE WIFE, &c.
- VI. THE WITCH, &c.
- VII. THE BISHOP, &c.
- VIII. THE CHORUS GIRL, &c.
- IX. THE SCHOOLMISTRESS, &c.
- X. THE HORSE-STEALERS, &c.
- XI. THE SCHOOLMASTER, &c.
- XII. THE COOK'S WEDDING, &c.
- XIII. LOVE, &c.

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DEAD SOULS

A POEM BY

NIKOLAY GOGOL

FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

CONSTANCE GARNETT

VOLUME ONE

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

1922

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

NIKOLAY VASSILYEVITCH GOGOL was born in 1809 near Mirgorod in the Ukraine. He was the delicate fragile child of a typical Russian land-owning family, pious, affectionate and passionately fond of music and theatricals. In 1829 he obtained a post in a government office in Petersburg, found his way into literary circles and met Pushkin, who was the first to welcome with enthusiasm his *Evenings on a Farm in the Ukraine*, a series of stories of Little Russian life, published in 1831. In the years immediately following he wrote his two famous comedies, and several short stories, and in 1842 published the first part of his masterpiece, the prose novel *Dead Souls*. It was to have consisted of three parts, but the second part he was constantly revising and three times threw into the fire. It was almost certainly finished, but only an incomplete MS. has survived. The third part was probably sketched in outline only.

His literary career was practically brought to an end by his unhappy publication of *Correspondence with Friends*, a selection of devout reflections and pious homilies in the form of letters. This he regarded as the supreme work of his life, and he was broken-hearted at the indignation and censure it provoked.

From this time to his death in 1852 he became

more and more absorbed in religious observances and morbid anxiety about his spiritual state.

The influence of Gogol may be traced in all the great writers that came after him. His realism, his humanity and irony, his 'laughter through tears' have given to all that is best in Russian literature its distinctive character.

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BOOK ONE

CHAPTERS I TO IX

CHAPTER I

A RATHER pretty little chaise on springs, such as bachelors, half-pay officers, staff-captains, land-owners with about a hundred serfs—in short, all such as are spoken of as ‘gentlemen of the middling sort’—drive about in, rolled in at the gates of the hotel of the provincial town of N. In the chaise sat a gentleman, not handsome but not bad-looking, not too stout and not too thin; it could not be said that he was old, neither could he be described as extremely young. His arrival in the town created no sensation whatever and was not accompanied by anything remarkable. Only two Russian peasants standing at the door of the tavern facing the hotel made some observations, with reference, however, rather to the carriage than to its occupant. ‘My eye,’ said one to the other, ‘isn’t that a wheel! What do you think? Would that wheel, if so it chanced, get to Moscow or would it never get there?’ ‘It would,’ answered the other. ‘But to Kazan now, I don’t think it would get there?’ ‘It wouldn’t get to Kazan,’ answered the other. With that the conversation ended. Moreover, just as the chaise drove up to the hotel it was met by a young man in extremely short and narrow white canvas trousers, in a coat with

fashionable cut-away tails and a shirt-front fastened with a Tula breastpin adorned with a bronze pistol. The young man turned round, stared at the chaise, holding his cap which was almost flying off in the wind, and went on his way.

When the chaise drove into the yard the gentleman was met by a hotel servant—waiter as they are called in the restaurants—a fellow so brisk and rapid in his movements that it was impossible to distinguish his countenance. He ran out nimbly with a dinner napkin in his hand, a long figure wearing a long frock-coat made of some cotton mixture with the waist almost up to the nape of his neck, tossed his locks and nimbly led the gentleman upstairs along the whole length of a wooden gallery to show the guest to the room Providence had sent him. The room was of the familiar type, but the hotel, too, was of the familiar type—that is, it was precisely like the hotels in provincial towns where for two roubles a day travellers get a quiet room with black beetle peeping out of every corner like prunes, and door, always barricaded with a chest of drawers, into the next apartment, of which the occupant, a quiet and taciturn but excessively inquisitive person, is interested in finding out every detail relating to the new-comer. The outer façade of the hotel corresponded with its internal peculiarities: it was a very long building of two storeys; the lower storey had not been stuccoed but left dark-red brick, which had become darker still from the violent changes of the weather, and also

somewhat dirty ; the upper storey had been painted the invariable yellow tint ; in the basement there were shops with horse-collars, ropes, and bread-rings. In the corner one of these shops, or rather in the window of it, there was a man who sold hot spiced drinks, with a samovar of red copper and a face as red as his samovar, so that from a distance one might have imagined that there were two samovars in the window, if one of them had not had a beard as black as pitch.

While the new-comer was inspecting his room, his luggage was carried up : first of all, a portmanteau of white leather, somewhat worn and evidently not on its first journey. The portmanteau was brought in by his coachman Selifan, a little man in a sheepskin, and his footman Petrushka, a fellow of thirty, somewhat sullen looking, with very thick lips and nose, wearing a rather shabby loose frock-coat that had evidently been his master's. After the portmanteau they carried up a small mahogany chest inlaid with hard birch, a pair of boot-trees, and a roast fowl wrapped up in blue paper. When all this had been brought in, the coachman Selifan went to the stables to look after the horses, while the footman Petrushka proceeded to instal himself in a little lobby, a very dark little cupboard, into which he had already conveyed his overcoat and with it his own peculiar odour, which was communicated also to the sack containing various articles for his flunkey toilet, which he brought up next. In this cupboard he put up against the wall a narrow three-legged bedstead, covering it with a

small travesty of a mattress, crushed as flat as a pancake, and perhaps as greasy, too, which he had succeeded in begging from the hotel-keeper.

While the servants were busy arranging things, their master went to the common room. [Every traveller knows very well what these common rooms are like. There were the usual painted walls, blackened above by smoke from the chimney, and glossy below from the backs of travellers of all sorts and more particularly of merchants of the district, for on market days merchants used to come here, in parties of six or seven, to drink their regular two cups of tea; there was the usual grimy ceiling, the usual smutty chandelier with a multitude of little hanging glass lustres which danced and tinkled every time the waiter ran over the shabby oilcloth, briskly flourishing a tray with as many teacups perched on it as birds on the seashore; there were the usual pictures, painted in oil, all over the walls; in short, everything was the same as it is everywhere, the only difference was that in one of the pictures a nymph was portrayed with a bosom more immense than the reader has probably ever seen.] Such freaks of nature, however, occur in all sorts of historical pictures which have been imported into Russia, there is no knowing at what date, from what place or by whom, though sometimes they are brought us by our grand gentlemen, lovers of the arts, who have purchased them in Italy on the advice of their couriers.

The gentleman removed his cap and unwound from his neck a woollen shawl of rainbow hues

such as married men are provided with by their wives, who add to those gifts suitable exhortations about wrapping themselves up. Who does the same for bachelors I cannot say for certain, God only knows : I have never worn such a shawl myself. When he had removed the shawl the gentleman ordered dinner. While they were serving him with various dishes usual in restaurants, such as cabbage soup with little pies of puff paste purposely kept for weeks in readiness for visitors, brains with peas, sausages with cabbage, roast pullet, salt cucumbers, and the eternal sweet puffs which are always at one's service ; while all these things were being set before him, some warmed up and some cold, he made the servant, or waiter, tell him all sorts of foolish things, such as who used to keep the hotel and who kept it now, and whether it was profitable and whether his master were a great rascal, to which the waiter made the usual answer : 'Oh, he is a great swindler, sir !' Both in enlightened Europe and in enlightened Russia there are nowadays many worthy persons who cannot eat in a restaurant without talking to waiters and sometimes even making amusing jokes at their expense. The questions put by the traveller were however not altogether foolish. He inquired with marked particularity who was the governor, who was the president of the court of justice, who was the public prosecutor, in short he did not omit to inquire about a single one of the more important local officials, and with even greater particularity, even with marked interest he inquired

about all the country gentlemen of consequence : how many souls of peasants each owned, how far from the town he lived, what were his characteristics and how often he visited the town. He made careful inquiries concerning the health of the countryside, whether there were any complaints in the province—such as epidemics, fevers, small-pox, and such like, and all this with a preciseness which betrayed more than simple curiosity. The gentleman had something solid and respectable in his manners and he blew his nose extremely loud. I cannot say how he did it but his nose resounded like a trumpet. This apparently innocent merit gained him much respect from the waiter, for every time he heard the sound he shook his locks, drew himself up more respectfully, and bending his head inquired whether he wanted anything. After dinner the gentleman drank a cup of coffee and sat on the sofa, propping his back against one of those cushions which in Russian hotels are stuffed not with supple wool but with something extraordinarily like bricks and pebbles. At this point he began to yawn and bade the waiter take him to his room, where he lay down and slept for a couple of hours. When he had rested he wrote, at the request of the waiter, on a slip of paper his rank in the service, his Christian name, and his surname to be presented in due course to the police. As he went downstairs the waiter spelled out as follows : ‘Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikov, collegiate councillor and landowner, travelling on his private business.’



[While the waiter was still engaged in spelling this out, Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikov went off to look at the town, with which he was, it appears, satisfied, for he considered that it was in no way inferior to other provincial towns: the yellow paint on the brick houses was extremely glaring, while the wood houses were a modest dark grey. The houses were of one storey, of two storeys, and of one and a half storeys with the everlasting mezzanine which provincial architects think so beautiful. In some parts these houses looked lost in the midst of a street as wide as a field and unending wooden fences; in other places they were all crowded together, and here more life and movement were noticeable. There were shop signboards with bread-rings or boots on them, almost effaced by the rain, with here and there a picture of blue trousers and the name of some tailor; in one place was a shop with caps, and the inscription: 'Vassily Fyodorov, foreigner'; in another place there was depicted a billiard table with two players in dress coats such as are worn in our theatres by the visitors who come on to the stage in the last act. The players were represented taking aim with the cue, their arms a little drawn back and their legs crooked as though they had just made an *entrechat* in the air. Under all this was inscribed: 'And here is the establishment.' Here and there, tables covered with nuts, soap, and cakes that looked like soap, stood simply in the street; and here and there was an eating-house with a fat fish and a fork stuck in it on the

signboard. More often than anything he observed, somewhat darkened by age, the two-headed imperial eagle which is nowadays replaced by the laconic inscription: 'Beer and spirits.' The pavement was everywhere in a bad state. He glanced too into the town park which consisted of skimpy and drooping trees, supported by props put in triangles and very handsomely painted green. Though these trees were no higher than a reed, yet in describing some illuminations the newspapers had said of them that: 'Our town has, thanks to the care of the municipal authorities, been adorned with a park of spreading shady trees that provide welcome coolness on a sultry day,' and that 'it was extremely touching to observe how the hearts of the townspeople were quivering with excess of gratitude and their eyes were brimming with tears in recognition of what they owed to his worship the Mayor.' After minutely questioning a policeman as to the nearest way to the cathedral, to the government offices and to the governor's, he went to have a look at the river which flowed through the middle of the town; on the way he tore off a poster affixed to a pole in order to read it carefully on returning home, stared at a lady of prepossessing exterior who was walking along the wooden side-walk, followed by a boy in military livery with a parcel in his hand, and after once more scrutinising it all as though to remember precisely the position of everything, he went home and straight up to his hotel room, slightly assisted up the staircase by the waiter.

After drinking tea he sat down before his table, ordered a candle, took the poster out of his pocket, held it to the light and began to read it, slightly screwing up his right eye. There was little of interest in the poster however: a play of Kotzebue's was being performed with Poplyovin in the part of Rolla and Mademoiselle Zyablov in that of Cora, and the other performers were even less noteworthy; he read through all their names, however, and even went on to the price of the orchestra stalls, and learned that the poster had been printed at the printing press of the government department of the province. Then he turned it over to find out if there was anything of interest on the other side, but, finding nothing, rubbed his eyes, folded it up neatly and put it in his chest, in which he had the habit of stowing away everything that turned up. The day was, I believe, concluded by a plateful of cold veal, a pint of sour cabbage soup, and a sound sleep, with every tap turned on, as the expression is in some parts of the spacious Russian empire.

The whole of the following day was devoted to visits. The new-comer set off to make calls upon all the dignitaries of the town. He paid his respects to the governor who, as it turned out, was like Tchitchikov himself, neither stout nor thin; he had the Anna on his neck, and was even said to have been recommended for a star. He was, however, a very simple and good-natured fellow, and sometimes actually embroidered on net. Then he went to the deputy-governor's, then visited the public prosecutor, the president of the court of

justice, the police-master, the spirit tax contractor, the superintendent of the government factories. . . . I am sorry to say it is rather difficult to recall all the great ones of this world ; but it is sufficient to say that the new-comer displayed an extraordinary activity in paying visits, he even called to show his regard for the inspector of the medical board and the town architect. And he sat for a good while afterwards in his chaise, wondering whether there was any one else he could visit, but it seemed there were no more officials in the town. In conversation with these potentates he very skilfully managed to flatter every one of them. To the governor he hinted, as it were casually, that one travelled in his province as in Paradise, that the roads were everywhere like velvet, and that governments which appointed wise rulers were worthy of the greatest praise. To the police-master he said something very flattering about the town police ; while in conversation with the deputy-governor and the president of the court, who were still only civil councillors, he twice said by mistake, ‘ your Excellency,’ which greatly gratified them. The consequence of this was that the governor gave him an invitation to an evening-party in his house that very day, and the other officials, too, invited him, one to dinner, another to a game of boston, another to a cup of tea.

The new-comer, as it seemed, avoided saying much about himself ; if he did speak of himself it was in generalities, with conspicuous modesty, and his speech on such occasions took somewhat a

bookish turn, such as : that he was only an insignificant worm and did not deserve to be the object of attention, that he had passed through many experiences in his time, had suffered for the cause of justice, had many enemies who had even attempted his life, and that now, desirous of living in peace, he was looking out to find a place for his permanent residence, and that being in the town he thought it his bounden duty to show his respect for its leading dignitaries. That was all that was learned in the town about this new personage who very shortly afterwards did not fail to put in an appearance at the governor's evening-party. The preparation for this evening-party occupied him over two hours, and on this occasion he exhibited a greater attention to his toilet than is commonly seen. After a brief after-dinner nap he asked for soap and water and spent an extremely long time scrubbing his cheeks with soap, putting his tongue into them to make them stand out ; then, taking a towel off the shoulder of the waiter, wiped his face in all directions, beginning from behind his ears, first giving two snorts right in the face of the waiter ; then he put on his shirt-front before the looking-glass, tweaked out two hairs that were protruding from his nose, and immediately after that attired himself in a shot cranberry-coloured dress coat. Having thus arrayed himself he drove in his own carriage through the immensely wide streets, illuminated by the faint light that came from the windows glimmering here and there. The governor's house,

however, was illuminated as though for a ball; there were carriages with lamps, two mounted policemen before the entrance, shouting postillions in the distance—in fact everything as it should be.

On entering the room Tchitchikov had for a moment to screw up his eyes, for the glare of the candles, the lamps, and the ladies' dresses was terrific. It was all flooded with light. Black coats flitted about, one by one or in groups, here and there, like flies flitting about a sparkling sugar-loaf on a hot July day when the old housekeeper breaks and splits it up into glistening lumps before the open window: the children all look on, gathered round her, watching with interest her rough hands lifting the hammer while airy squadrons of flies, floating on the breeze, fly in boldly as though the house belonged to them and, taking advantage of the old woman's dim sight and the sunshine that dazzles her eyes, cover the dainty morsels, here in scattered groups, and there in dense crowds. Sated by the wealth of summer which spreads dainties for them at every step, they fly in, not for food but to display themselves, to parade up and down over the heap of sugar, to rub their hind legs or their front legs one against the other, or to scratch themselves under their wings, or stretching out both front legs to brush their heads with them, to turn and fly out again and to fly in once more in new persistent squadrons.

Tchitchikov had hardly time to look about him when the governor took him by the arm and at once presented him to his wife. The new-comer

did not lose his head, but paid her some compliment extremely suitable for a man of his age, who is of a rank in the service neither exalted nor very humble. When the couples of dancers taking their places pressed every one back to the wall, he gazed at them very attentively for two or three minutes with his hands behind him. Many of the ladies were well and fashionably dressed. Others were dressed in whatever Providence was pleased to send them in a provincial town. The men here as everywhere were of two kinds; first, the thin who were always hanging about the ladies; some of them could hardly be distinguished from Petersburgers: they had the same elaborately and tastefully combed whiskers or the same pleasing, smoothly shaven, oval faces, they seated themselves beside the ladies in the same casual way, spoke French and diverted the ladies just like gentlemen from Petersburg. The second class consisted of the stout or those like Tchitchikov who, though not extremely stout, were certainly not thin. These, on the contrary, looked askance at the ladies and held aloof from them, while they gazed about to see whether the governor's servants had yet set the table for whist. Their faces were round and full, some of them even had warts, some of them even were pock-marked; they did not wear their hair either in a top-knot or in curls, nor *à la diable m'emporte* as the French call it; their hair was either cropped short or plastered to their heads, and their features inclined rather to the round and solid. These were the more dignified officials of the town. Alas! the

stout know better how to manage their affairs in this world than the thin. The thin serve rather on special commissions or are mere supernumeraries, sent here and there. Their existence is somehow too light and airy and not to be depended upon. The stout never go by by-paths but always keep to the main road, and if they seat themselves anywhere they sit firmly and reliably, so that their seat is more likely to give way under them than they are to be dislodged from it. They are not fond of external display. Their coats are not so smartly cut as the thin man's; their wardrobe is better stocked however. The thin man will in three years' time not have a single serf left unmortgaged: while, if you take a quiet look round, the fat man has a house at the end of the town bought in the name of his wife; later on, at the other end of the town, another one, then a little village near the town, then an estate with all the conveniences. In the end the fat man, after serving God and his Tsar and winning universal respect, leaves the service, moves away and becomes a land-owner, a hearty hospitable Russian gentleman,—he gets on, and indeed gets on very well. And when he has gone, his thin heirs in accordance with the Russian tradition make ducks and drakes of all their father's property. I cannot disguise the fact that such were the reflections which occupied Tchitchikov's mind while he was scrutinising the company, and the result of them was that he finally joined the fat ones, among whom he found all the personages he knew: the public prosecutor with very black

thick eyebrows and with the left eye given to winking slightly as though to say: 'Come into the next room, my boy, I have something to tell you,' though he was a serious and taciturn man; the postmaster, a short man who was a wit and a philosopher; the president of the court, a very sagacious and polite man,—all of whom welcomed him as an old acquaintance, while Tchitchikov responded to their civilities by profuse bows a little to one side but no less agreeable for that. Then he made the acquaintance of a very civil and affable landowner called Manilov, and another, somewhat clumsy-looking, called Sobakevitch who to begin with trod on his foot, saying, 'I beg your pardon.' Then they thrust upon him a card for whist, which he accepted with the same polite bow. They sat down to a green table and did not get up before supper. All conversation ceased entirely, as is always the case when people give themselves up to an important occupation. Though the postmaster was a very talkative person, yet as soon as he took up his cards his face at once became expressive of thought, while his upper lip was drawn down over the lower one and remained so all the time he was playing. When he played a court card, he would strike the table violently with his hand, saying if it were a queen, 'Away with you, old priest's wife,' if it were a king, 'Away with you, sambov peasant!'—while the president would say, 'I'll pull his whiskers, I'll pull her whiskers!' Sometimes as cards were slapped down on the table, comments burst out, 'Ah, come what may!

there's nothing else, so play a diamond!' or the suits were called by various endearing nicknames with which they had rechristened them. At the end of the game they disputed rather loudly, as is usual. Our hero disputed, but so extremely skillfully, that every one could see that though he was arguing, he was arguing agreeably. He never said, 'You led,' but 'You were pleased to lead; I had the honour to cover your two,' and so on. To propitiate his opponents still further he invariably offered them his silver enamelled snuff-box, at the bottom of which they noticed two violets put there for the sake of the scent. The newcomer's attention was particularly engaged by Manilov and Sobakevitch, the landowners above mentioned. He immediately drew the president and the postmaster a little aside and made inquiries concerning them. Several of the questions put by him showed not only a love of knowledge but also solid sense in the visitor, for he first of all inquired how many souls of peasants each of them possessed and in what condition their estates were, and only afterwards inquired their Christian name and father's name. Before long he had succeeded in completely fascinating them. Manilov, a man who had hardly reached middle-age, with eyes as sweet as sugar which he screwed up every time he laughed, was enchanted with him. He pressed his hand very warmly and begged him earnestly to do him the honour of a visit to his country place, which in his words was only ten miles from the town gate; to which Tchitchikov, with a very polite inclination

of the head and cordial pressure of the hand, replied that he was not only extremely eager to do so, but would positively regard it as a sacred duty. Sobakevitch too said somewhat laconically, 'And I invite you too,' with a scrape of his foot, shod in a boot of such gigantic proportions that it would be hard to find a foot to fit it, particularly nowadays when even in Russia giants are beginning to die out.

Next day Tchitchikov went to dinner and to spend the evening at the police-master's, where after dinner they sat down to whist at three o'clock and played till two o'clock in the morning. There he made the acquaintance, among others, of a landowner called Nozdryov, a man of thirty, a jolly good fellow who from the first three or four words began to address him familiarly. With the police-master and public prosecutor Nozdryov was on equally friendly and familiar terms; but when they sat down to play for high stakes, both the gentlemen kept an extremely careful watch on the tricks he took and noted almost every card he played. Next day Tchitchikov spent the evening with the president of the court, who received his visitors in his somewhat greasy dressing-gown, and in the company of two somewhat dubious ladies. Then he spent an evening at the deputy-governor's, went to a big dinner at the spirit tax contractor's, and to a little dinner at the public prosecutor's which was however as good as a big one; he went also to a lunch after mass, given by the mayor of the town, which was as good as a dinner,—in short he had not to spend a single hour at home and returned

to the hotel only to sleep. The new-comer was quite at his ease on every occasion and showed himself an experienced man of the world. Whatever the subject of conversation he could always keep it up: were horse-breeding discussed, he talked about horse-breeding; if they conversed about the best dogs, on that subject too he made very apt observations; if they touched on a case inquired into by the court of justice, he showed that he was not ignorant of court procedure; if the topic were a game of billiards, he was not at sea in billiards either; if the conversation turned upon virtue, he made excellent reflections upon virtue and even with tears in his eyes; upon the preparation of hot punch, he was an authority on punch too; upon overseers of customs and excise officers, he discoursed about them too as though he had been himself an excise officer or overseer of the customs. But it was noteworthy that he succeeded in accompanying all this with a certain sedateness, and knew very well how to behave. He spoke neither too loud nor too low, but exactly as he ought. Take him how you would, he was a thoroughly gentlemanly man. All the government officials were pleased at the arrival of the new-comer. The governor pronounced that he was a man thoroughly to be depended upon; the public prosecutor said that he was a practical man; the colonel of the gendarmes said that he was a well-educated man; the president of the court said that he was a well-informed and estimable man; the police-master that he was an estimable and

agreeable man ; the police-master's wife that he was a most agreeable and most amiable man. Though Sobakevitch rarely said anything good of any one, yet even he, after returning rather late from town, undressing and getting into bed beside his scraggy wife, said to her : ' I spent the evening at the governor's, my love, and dined at the police-master's and made the acquaintance of a collegiate councillor called Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikov, a very agreeable man ! ' To which his spouse responded with : ' H'm,' and kicked him.

Such was the very flattering opinion that was formed of the visitor in the town, and it was maintained until a strange peculiarity and enterprise of his, or, as they say in the provinces, a ' passage,' of which the reader will soon hear more, reduced almost the whole town to utter perplexity.

CHAPTER II

OUR new-comer had stayed for over a week in the town, driving about to evening-parties and dinners and so passing his time, as it is called, very agreeably. At last he made up his mind to carry his visits beyond the town and to go and see Manilov and Sobakevitch as he had promised. Perhaps he was impelled to this by another more essential reason, by something more serious and nearer to his heart. . . . But of all this the reader will learn by degrees in due season, if only he has the patience to read through the following narrative, a very long one, since it has later on to cover a wider and wider ground as it approaches its conclusion.

Selifan the coachman was given orders to put the horses into the familiar chaise early in the morning; Petrushka was instructed to remain at home to look after the room and the portmanteau. It will not be amiss for the reader to be made acquainted with these two serfs of our hero's. Although of course they are not very prominent characters but are rather what are called secondary or even tertiary, though the principal events and the mainsprings of the poem do not rest upon them, and only here and there touch and lightly catch upon them, yet the author likes to be extremely circumstantial in everything, and in that

respect, though a Russian, prefers to be as precise as a German. This however will not take up much time and space, since we need not add much to what the reader knows already, that is, that Petrushka wore a rather roomy brown coat that had been his master's, and had, as usual with persons of his calling, a thick nose and lips. He was rather of a taciturn than of a talkative disposition; he even had a generous yearning for enlightenment, that is, for reading books, over the subject of which he did not trouble himself: it was precisely the same to him whether it was the story of a love-sick hero's adventures, or simply a dictionary or a prayer-book—he read everything with equal attention. If he had been offered a manual of chemistry he would not have refused it. He liked not so much what he read as the reading itself, or rather the process of reading, the fact that the letters continually made up a word and the devil knows what it might sometimes mean. His reading was for the most part done in a recumbent position on the bedstead in the passage and on a mattress which had through this habit been flattened out as thin as a wafer. Apart from his passion for reading he had two other characteristics; he slept without undressing, just as he was, in the same coat, and he always brought with him his own peculiar atmosphere, his individual odour which was suggestive of a room which has been lived in a long time, so that it was enough for him to put up his bedstead somewhere even in a room hitherto uninhabited, and to instal there

his greatcoat and belongings, for it to seem at once as though people had been living in the room for the last ten years. Tchitchikov, who was a very fastidious and in some cases an over-particular man, would pucker up his face when he sniffed the air in the morning and, shaking his head, would say: 'Goodness knows what it is, my boy, you are in a sweat or something, you should go to the bath.' To which Petrushka made no reply but tried to be very busy about something at once: either he went with a brush to his master's dress coat hanging on a peg, or simply put something in its place. What was he thinking while he was silent? Perhaps he was saying to himself: 'You are a nice one too, you are never tired of saying the same thing forty times over . . .' God knows, it is hard to tell what a serf is thinking when his master is giving him a lecture. So much then may be said of Petrushka to start with. Selifan, the coachman, was quite a different man. . . . But the author is really ashamed of occupying his readers' attention so long with persons of a low class, knowing from experience how reluctant they are to make acquaintance with the lower orders. It is characteristic of the Russian that he has a great passion for making the acquaintance of any one who is ever so little higher in rank, and a nodding acquaintance with a count or a prince is more precious to him than the closest friendship of ordinary human beings. The author, indeed, is a little anxious over his hero who is only a collegiate councillor. Court councillors perhaps will

consent to make his acquaintance, but those who have attained the rank of general may perhaps—God knows—cast upon him one of those contemptuous glances which a man proudly casts at everything which grovels at his feet, or, worse still perhaps, pass by with an indifference that will stab the author to the heart. But however mortifying either of these alternatives would be, we must in any case return now to our hero.

And so, having given his orders overnight, he woke up very early in the morning, washed, rubbing himself from head to foot with a wet sponge, an operation only performed on Sundays—and it happened to be a Sunday—he shaved so thoroughly that his cheeks were like satin for smoothness and glossiness, he put on his shot cranberry-coloured swallow-tail coat, then his overcoat lined with thick bearskin; then, supported first on one side and then on the other by the waiter, he went downstairs and got into his chaise. The chaise drove rumbling out of the gates of the hotel into the street. A passing priest took off his hat, some street urchins in dirty shirts held out their hands, saying, ‘Something for a poor orphan, sir!’ The coachman, noticing that one of them was very zealous to stand on the footboard, gave him a lash with the whip, and the chaise went jolting over the cobble-stones. It was not without relief that our hero saw in the distance the striped barrier post that indicated that to the cobbled road as to every form of torture there would soon be an end, and after striking his head rather violently against

the sides of the chaise two or three times more, Tchitchikov glided at last over the soft earth. As soon as the town was left behind, all sorts of wild rubbish and litter made its appearance on both sides of the road, as is usually the case in Russia : mounds of earth, firwoods, low scanty thickets of young pines, the charred stumps of old ones, wild heather and such stuff. They came upon villages consisting of a string of huts, looking like old timber stacks, covered with grey roofs with carvings under them, that resembled embroidered towels. As usual a few peasants sat gaping on benches in front of their gates, dressed in their sheepskins ; peasant women, tightly girt above the bosom, showed their fat faces at the upper windows ; from the lower ones a calf stared or a pig poked out its small-eyed snout. In short, there were the familiar sights.

After driving about ten miles our hero remembered that from Manilov's account his village ought to be here, but the eleventh mile was passed and still the village was not to be seen, and if they had not happened to meet two peasants they could hardly have reached their destination. To the question, 'Is the village of Zamanilovka far from here?' the peasants took off their hats and one of them with a wedge-shaped beard, somewhat more intelligent than the other, answered : 'Manilovka perhaps, not Zamanilovka ?'

'Yes, I suppose, Manilovka.'

'Manilovka ! Well, if you go on another half mile then you turn straight off to the right.'

‘To the right,’ repeated the coachman.

‘To the right,’ said the peasant. ‘That will be your road to Manilovka ; but there is no such place as Zamanilovka. That is what it is called, its name is Manilovka, but as for Zamanilovka there is no such place here about. There straight before you on the hill you will see the house, built of brick, two storeys high — the manor house, that is, where the gentleman himself lives. There you have Manilovka, but there is no Zamanilovka here and never has been.’

They drove on to look for Manilovka. After going on another mile and a half they came to a by-road to the right; but they drove on another mile, and two miles, and three miles and still no brick house of two storeys was to be seen. At that point Tchitchikov recalled the fact that if a friend invites one into the country a distance of ten miles it always turns out to be twenty. Few people would have been attracted by the situation of the village of Manilovka. The manor house stood on a bluff, that is, on a height exposed to every wind that might chance to blow ; the slope of the hill on which it stood was covered with closely-shaven turf. Two or three flower-beds with bushes of lilac and yellow acacia were scattered about it in the English fashion ; birch-trees in small groups of five or six together lifted here and there their skimpy tiny-leaved crests. Under two such birch-trees could be seen an arbour with a flattish green cupola, blue wood pillars, and an inscription : ‘The Temple of solitary medi-

tation'; lower down there was a pond covered with green scum, which is however nothing uncommon in the English gardens of Russian landowners. Grey log huts, which our hero for some unknown reason instantly proceeded to count, and of which he made out over two hundred, lay here and there at the foot of the hill and for some distance up the slope of it. Nowhere was there a growing tree or any kind of greenery among them to relieve the monotony of the grey logs. The scene was enlivened by two peasant women who, with their skirts picturesquely tucked up on all sides, were wading over their knees in the pond, dragging by two wooden poles a torn net in which two crayfish were entangled and a gleaming roach could be seen; the women seemed to be quarrelling and were scolding each other about something. A pine forest of a dreary bluish colour made a dark blur in the distance. Even the very weather was in keeping. The day was neither bright nor gloomy but of a light-grey tint,—such as is only seen in the uniforms of garrison soldiers, those peaceful—though on Sundays apt to be intemperate—forces. To complete the picture, a cock, herald of changing weather, crowed very loudly, though his head had been pecked to the brain by other cocks during his flirtations, and even flapped his wings plucked bare as old bast mats.

As he drove up to the courtyard, Tchitchikov noticed on the doorstep the master of the house himself, who attired in a green coat of shalloon was standing, holding his hand to his forehead to

screen his eyes from the sun and get a better view of the approaching carriage. The nearer it came, the more delighted he looked and the broader was his smile.

‘Pavel Ivanovitch!’ he cried, as Tchitchikov alighted from the chaise. ‘So you have remembered us at last!’

The friends kissed each other very warmly and Manilov led his visitor indoors. Though the time spent by them in passing through the vestibule, the hall, and the dining-room will be somewhat brief, yet we must snatch the opportunity to say a few words about the master of the house. But at this point the author must confess that the task is a very difficult one. It is much easier to describe characters on a grander scale: then you simply have to throw the colour by handfuls on the canvas—black, glowing eyes, overhanging brows, a forehead lined by care, a black or fiery crimson cloak flung over the shoulder, and the portrait is complete. But all the gentlemen (of whom there are so many in the world) who look so very much alike and yet, when you inspect them more closely, have many extremely elusive peculiarities, are fearfully difficult to describe. One has to strain one’s attention to the utmost to make all the delicate almost indiscernible traits stand out, and altogether one needs to look deeply with an eye sharpened by long practice in the art.

God alone could say what Manilov’s character was like. There are people who are always spoken of as being ‘so-so,’ neither one thing nor the other,

neither flesh, fowl, nor good red herring, as the saying is. Possibly Manilov must be included in their number. In appearance, he was good-looking; the features of his countenance were rather agreeable, but in that agreeableness there was an overdose of sugar; in his deportment and manners there was something that betrayed an anxiety to win goodwill and friendship. He smiled ingratiatingly, he had fair hair and blue eyes. At the first moment of conversation with him one could not but say, 'What a kind and agreeable man!' The next minute one would say nothing, and the third minute one would say, 'What the devil is one to make of it?' and would walk away; if one did not walk away one would be aware of a deadly boredom. You would never hear from him a hasty or even over-eager word, such as you may hear from almost any one if you touch on a subject that upsets him. Every one has his weak spot: in one man it takes the form of hounds, another imagines that he is a great amateur of music and has a wonderful feeling for its inmost depths; a third is proud of his feats at the dining-table. A fourth is for playing a part if only one inch higher than that allotted him by fate; a fifth with more limited aspirations, dreams waking and sleeping of being seen on the promenade with a court adjutant to the admiration of his friends and acquaintances, and of strangers, too, indeed; a sixth is endowed with a hand which feels a supernatural prompting to turn down the corner of an ace of diamonds or of a two, while a

seventh positively itches to maintain discipline everywhere and to enforce his views on station-masters and cabmen. In short every one has some peculiarity, but Manilov had nothing. At home he spoke very little, and for the most part confined himself to meditation and thought, but what he thought about, that too, God only knows. It could not be said that he busied himself in looking after his land, he never even drove out into the fields; the estate looked after itself somehow. When the steward said, 'It would be a good thing to do this or that, sir,' 'Yes, it would not be amiss,' he would usually reply, smoking his pipe, a habit he had taken to while he was in the army, in which he was considered a most modest, refined, and highly-cultured officer. 'Yes, it certainly would not be amiss,' he would repeat. When a peasant came to him and, scratching the back of his head, said, 'Master, give me leave of absence to earn money for my taxes,' 'You can go,' he would say, smoking his pipe, and it would never enter his head that the peasant was going for a drinking-bout. Sometimes, looking from the steps into the yard or at the pond, he would say how nice it would be to make an underground passage from the house, or build a bridge over the pond with stalls on each side of it and shopmen sitting in them, selling all sorts of small articles of use to the peasants. And as he did so, his eyes would become extraordinarily sugary, and an expression of the greatest satisfaction would come into his face. All these projects

ended in nothing but words, however. In his study there always lay a book with a marker at the fourteenth page, which he had been reading for the last two years. In his home something was always lacking: in the drawing-room there was excellent furniture upholstered in smart silken material which had certainly cost a good price, but there had not been enough of it to cover everything and two of the easy-chairs had remained simply swathed in sacking. The master of the house had been for some years past in the habit of warning his guests: 'Don't sit on those arm-chairs, they are not finished yet.' In some of the rooms there was no furniture at all, although in the early days after their marriage he had said to his wife: 'To-morrow, my love, we must see about putting some furniture into those rooms if only for a time.' In the evening a very handsome candlestick of dark bronze with antique figures of the three Graces and an elegant mother-of-pearl shield was put on the table, and beside it was set a humble copper relic, unsteady on its legs and always covered with tallow, though this never attracted the notice of the master of the house, the mistress, or the servants. His wife was . . . however they were thoroughly satisfied with each other. Although they had been married over eight years they would still each offer the other a piece of apple or a sweet or a nut, and say in a touchingly tender voice expressive of the most perfect devotion: 'Open your little mouth, my love, and I will pop it in.' It need hardly be said that on

such occasions the little mouth was gracefully opened. For birthdays they prepared surprises for each other—such as a beaded case for a toothbrush. And very often as they sat on the sofa, all at once, entirely without any apparent cause, he would lay down his pipe and she her needlework, if she happened to have it in her hands at the time, and they would imprint on each other's lips a kiss so prolonged and languishing, that a small cigar might easily have been smoked while it lasted. In short, they were what is called happy. Of course, it might be observed that there are many other things to be done in a house besides exchanging prolonged kisses and preparing surprises, and many different questions might be asked. Why was it, for instance, that the cooking was foolishly and badly done? Why was it that the storeroom was rather empty? Why was it the housekeeper was a thief? Why was it that the servants were drunken and immoral? Why was it all the house-serfs slept in a conscienceless way and spent the rest of their time in loose behaviour? But all these subjects were low, and Madame Manilov had had a good education. And a good education, as we all know, is received in a boarding-school; and in boarding-schools, as we all know, three principal subjects lay the foundation of all human virtues: the French language, indispensable for the happiness of family life; the pianoforte, to furnish moments of agreeable relaxation to husbands; and finally domestic training in particular, *i.e.* the knitting of purses and other

surprises. It is true that there are all sorts of improvements and changes of method, especially in these latter days : everything depends on the good sense and capacity of the lady-principals of these establishments. In some boarding-schools, for instance, it is usual to put the pianoforte first, then French, and then domestic training. While in others domestic training, that is, the knitting of 'surprises,' takes the foremost place, then comes French, and only then the pianoforte. There are all sorts of variations. It may not be out of place to observe also that Madame Manilov . . . but, I must own, I feel frightened of talking about ladies, besides it is time for me to get back to my heroes, whom we have left standing for some minutes before the drawing-room door, each begging the other to pass in first.

'Pray don't put yourself out on my account, I will follow you,' said Tchitchikov.

'No, Pavel Ivanovitch, no, you are the visitor,' said Manilov, motioning him to the door with his hand.

'Don't stand on ceremony, please ; please go first,' said Tchitchikov.

'No, you must excuse me, I cannot allow such an agreeable, highly cultured guest to walk behind me.'

'Why highly cultured ? . . . Please pass in.'

'No, you, pray walk in.'

'But why ?'

'Why, because !' Manilov said with an agreeable smile.

Finally the two friends walked in at the door sideways, somewhat squeezing each other.

‘Allow me to introduce my wife,’ said Manilov. ‘My love, this is Pavel Ivanovitch!’

Tchitchikov did indeed observe a lady whom he had not noticed while bowing and scraping with Manilov in the doorway. She was not bad-looking and was becomingly dressed. Her loose brocaded silk gown of a pale colour hung well upon her: her delicate little hand flung something hurriedly on the table and crushed a cambric handkerchief with embroidered corners. She got up from the sofa on which she was sitting. Tchitchikov not without satisfaction bent to kiss her hand. Madame Manilov said, even speaking with a slight lisp, that they were greatly delighted at his visit and that not a day passed without her husband’s mentioning him.

‘Yes,’ observed Manilov, ‘she has been continually asking me, “Why doesn’t your friend come?” “Wait a little, my love,” I told her, “he will come.” And here at last you have honoured us with a visit. It really is a pleasure you have given us . . . a May day . . . a festival of the heart.’

Tchitchikov was actually a little embarrassed on hearing that it had already come to festivals of the heart, and answered modestly that he had no great name nor distinguished rank.

‘You have everything,’ Manilov pronounced with the same agreeable smile, ‘you have everything: more, indeed.’

‘What do you think of our town?’ inquired Madame Manilov. ‘Have you passed your time there pleasantly?’

‘A very nice town, a fine town,’ replied Tchitchikov, ‘and I have spent a most agreeable time: the society is most amiable.’

‘And what did you think of our governor?’ said Madame Manilov.

‘He really is a most estimable and genial man, isn’t he?’ added Manilov.

‘Perfectly true,’ assented Tchitchikov, ‘a most estimable man. And how thoroughly he throws himself into his duties, how thoroughly he understands them! If only there were more men like him!’

‘How well he understands, you know, entertaining all sorts; what delicacy he displays in his manners!’ Manilov chimed in with a smile, and he almost closed his eyes with gratification like a tom-cat who is being gently scratched behind his ears.

‘A most affable and agreeable man,’ continued Tchitchikov, ‘and what a clever man he is! I could never have imagined it: how well he embroiders all sorts of patterns. He showed me some of his handiwork, a purse: not many ladies could have embroidered it so well.’

‘And the deputy-governor, isn’t he a charming man?’ said Manilov, again screwing up his eyes.

‘A most worthy man, most worthy,’ answered Tchitchikov.

‘And let me ask you, what was your impression

of the police-master? He is a very agreeable man, is he not?’

‘Extremely agreeable, and what an intelligent, well-read man! We were playing whist at his house with the public prosecutor and the president of the court till cock-crow. A most worthy man, most worthy!’

‘And what did you think of the police-master’s wife?’ added Madame Manilov. ‘A most amiable woman, isn’t she?’

‘Oh, she is one of the most estimable ladies I have ever known,’ answered Tchitchikov.

Then they did not omit to mention the president of the court and the postmaster, and in this way ran through the names of almost all the officials in the town, who were, as it appeared, all excellent persons.

‘Do you spend all your time in the country?’ inquired Tchitchikov, venturing upon a question in his turn.

‘Most of the time we do,’ answered Manilov. ‘Sometimes, however, we do visit the town simply in order to see something of cultured people. One grows too rustic if one stays shut up for ever.’

‘That is true, that is true,’ said Tchitchikov.

‘Of course,’ Manilov went on, ‘it would be a different matter if we had nice neighbours, if for instance there were some one with whom one could to some extent converse on polished and refined subjects, pursue some sort of study that would stir the soul, it would give one inspiration, so to say . . .’ He would have expressed something

more, but, perceiving that he was wandering a little from the point, he merely twiddled his fingers in the air, and went on: 'In that case, of course, the country and solitude would have many charms. But there is absolutely no one. . . . Sometimes one is reduced to reading the *Son of the Fatherland*. . . .'

Tchitchikov agreed with this view entirely, adding that nothing could be more agreeable than to live in solitude, to enjoy the spectacle of nature and from time to time to read. . . .

'But you know,' added Manilov, 'if one has no friends with whom one can share . . .'

'Oh, that is true, that is perfectly true,' Tchitchikov interrupted him. 'What are all the treasures in the world then! Not money, but good company, a wise man has said.'

'And do you know, Pavel Ivanovitch,' said Manilov, while his face wore an expression not merely sweet but sickly cloying sweet, like a dose some tactful society doctor has mercilessly over-sweetened, thinking to gratify his patient, 'then one feels to some extent a spiritual enjoyment. . . . Here now, for instance, when chance has given me the rare, one may say unique, happiness of conversing with you and enjoying your agreeable conversation . . .'

'Upon my word, how can my conversation be agreeable? I am an insignificant person and nothing more,' answered Tchitchikov.

'Oh, Pavel Ivanovitch, allow me to be open with you! I would gladly give half my fortune to

possess some of the qualities with which you are endowed !’

‘On the contrary, I for my part should esteem it the greatest . . .’

There is no saying what pitch the mutual outpouring of sentiment between these two friends might have reached, had not a servant entered to announce a meal.

‘Pray come to dinner,’ said Manilov. ‘You must excuse it if we have not a dinner such as you get in parqueted halls and great cities ; we have simply cabbage soup in Russian style, but we offer it from our hearts. Pray go in.’

At this point they spent some time in disputing which should pass in first, and finally Tchitchikov walked sideways into the dining-room.

In the dining-room there were already two boys, Manilov’s sons, children of an age to sit at the dinner table but still on high chairs. With them was their tutor, who bowed politely with a smile. The lady of the house sat behind the soup tureen ; the visitor was placed between his host and hostess. A servant tied dinner napkins round the children’s necks.

‘What charming children !’ said Tchitchikov, looking at them. ‘How old are they ?’

‘The elder is eight and the younger was six yesterday,’ said Madame Manilov.

‘Themistoclus,’ said Manilov, addressing the elder boy who was trying to free his chin which had been tied up in the dinner napkin by the footman. Tchitchikov raised his eyebrows a little

when he heard this somewhat Greek name, which for some unknown reason Manilov ended with the syllable *us*; but he tried at once to bring his countenance back to its usual expression.

‘Themistoclus! tell me which is the finest town in France?’

At this point the tutor concentrated his whole attention on Themistoclus and looked as though he were going to spring into his face, but was completely reassured at last and nodded his head when Themistoclus said: ‘Paris.’

‘And which is our finest town?’ Manilov asked again.

The tutor pricked up his ears again.

‘Petersburg,’ answered Themistoclus.

‘And any other?’

‘Moscow,’ answered Themistoclus.

‘The clever boy, the darling!’ Tchitchikov said upon this. ‘Upon my soul,’ he went on, addressing the Manilovs with an air of some astonishment, ‘at his age, and already so much knowledge. I can assure you that that child will show marked abilities!’

‘Oh, you don’t know him yet,’ answered Manilov, ‘he has a very keen wit. The younger now, Alkides, is not so quick, but this fellow if he comes upon anything such as a beetle or a lady-bird, his eyes are racing after it at once; he runs after it and notices it directly. I intend him for the diplomatic service. Themistoclus,’ he went on, addressing the boy again, ‘would you like to be an ambassador?’

‘Yes, I should,’ answered Themistoclus, munching bread, and wagging his head from right to left.

At that moment the footman standing behind his chair wiped the ambassador’s nose, and he did well, as something very unpleasant might else have dropped into the soup. The conversation at the dinner table began upon the charms of a tranquil life, interspersed with observations from the hostess about the town theatre and the actors in it. The tutor kept an attentive watch upon the speakers, and whenever he saw they were on the point of laughing, he instantly opened his mouth and laughed vigorously. Probably he was a man of grateful disposition and wished to repay the master of the house for his kindly treatment of him. On one occasion, however, his face assumed a severe expression and he sternly tapped on the table, fastening his eyes on the children sitting opposite him. This was in the nick of time, for Themistoclus had just bitten Alkides’ ear, and Alkides, screwing up his eyes and opening his mouth, was on the point of breaking into piteous sobs, but, reflecting that he might easily lose the rest of his dinner, he brought his mouth back to its normal position and, with tears in his eyes, began gnawing a mutton bone till both his cheeks were greasy and shining.

The lady of the house often addressed Tchitchikov with the words: ‘You are eating nothing, you have taken such a little.’ To which Tchitchikov invariably answered: ‘Thank you very

much, I have done very well. Agreeable conversation is better than the best of good fare.'

They got up from the table. Manilov was extremely delighted and, supporting his visitor's backbone with his arm, was preparing to conduct him to the drawing-room, when all at once the visitor announced with a very significant air that he was proposing to speak to him about a very important matter.

'In that case allow me to invite you into my study,' said Manilov, and he led him into a small room, the window of which looked out towards the forest, bluish in the distance.

'This is my den,' said Manilov.

'A pleasant little room,' said Tchitchikov, scanning it. The room certainly was not without charm: the walls were painted a greyish-blue colour; there were four chairs, one easy-chair, a table on which lay the book and in it the book-marker which we have already had occasion to mention; but what was most in evidence was tobacco. It was conspicuous in various receptacles: in packets, in a jar, and also scattered in a heap on the table. In both the windows also there were little heaps of ashes, carefully arranged in very elegant lines. It might be gathered that their arrangement at moments afforded the master of the house a pastime.

'Allow me to beg you to take this easy-chair,' said Manilov. 'You will be more comfortable.'

'Excuse me, I will sit on this chair.'

'Allow me not to excuse you,' said Manilov with

a smile. 'This easy-chair is always assigned to my guests; whether you like or not you must sit in it.'

Tchitchikov sat down.

'Allow me to offer you a pipe.'

'No, thank you, I do not smoke,' said Tchitchikov affably and with an air of regret.

'Why not?' asked Manilov also affably and with an air of regret.

'I am not used to it, I am afraid of it; they say smoking a pipe dries up the system.'

'Allow me to observe that that is a prejudice. I imagine, indeed, that it is far better for the health to smoke a pipe than to take snuff. There was a lieutenant in our regiment, a very excellent and highly cultured man, who never had a pipe out of his mouth, not only at table but, if I may say so, in every other place. By now he is over forty but, thank God, he is as strong and well as any one could wish to be.'

Tchitchikov observed that it did happen like that and that there were many things in nature that could not be explained even by the profoundest intellect.

'But allow me first to ask one question . . . ,' he added in a voice in which there rang a strange, or almost strange, intonation, and thereupon for some unknown reason he looked round behind him. And Manilov too for some unknown reason looked behind him. 'How long is it since you made out a census return?'

'Oh, not for a long time; in fact, I don't remember when.'

‘ So that since then a good many of your peasants have died ? ’

‘ About that I can’t say ; I think we must ask my steward. Hey, boy ! Call the steward ; he was to be here to-day.’

The steward appeared. He was a man about forty who shaved his beard, wore a frock-coat and apparently led a very easy life, for his face looked plump and puffy, and the yellow complexion and little eyes betrayed that he was not a stranger to feather beds and pillows. It could be seen at once that he had made his way in life as all gentlemen’s stewards do : he had once been simply a boy in the household who could read and write, then had married some Agashka, a house-keeper and favourite of the mistress, had himself become keeper of the stores and then steward. And, having become a steward, he behaved, of course, like all stewards : he hob-nobbed with those who were richer in the village and added to the burdens of the poorer ; when he woke after eight o’clock in the morning he waited for the samovar and drank his tea before he went out.

‘ I say, my good man, how many of our peasants have died since the census was taken ? ’

‘ How many ? A good many have died since then,’ said the steward, and he hiccupped, putting his hand before his mouth like a shield.

‘ Yes, I confess I thought so myself,’ Manilov assented. ‘ A great many have died.’

Then he turned to Tchitchikov and added : ‘ Certainly, a very great many.’

‘And what number, for instance?’ Tchitchikov inquired.

‘Yes, how many precisely?’ Manilov chimed in.

‘Why, how can I say what number? There is no telling, you know, how many have died, no one has counted them.’

‘Yes, precisely,’ said Manilov, addressing Tchitchikov. ‘I, too, supposed there had been a considerable mortality; it is quite uncertain how many have died.’

‘Please count them,’ said Tchitchikov to the steward, ‘and make an exact list of all of them by name.’

‘Yes, of all of them by name,’ said Manilov.

The steward said, ‘Yes, sir,’ and went out.

‘And for what reason do you want to know?’ Manilov inquired when the steward had gone.

This question seemed to put the visitor in some difficulty: his face betrayed a strained effort which even made him flush crimson, an effort to express something not easily put into words. And indeed Manilov did at last hear things more strange and extraordinary than human ears had ever heard before.

‘You ask for what reason. The reason is this, I should like to buy the peasants . . .,’ said Tchitchikov, hesitating and not finishing his sentence.

‘But allow me to ask,’ said Manilov, ‘how do you wish to buy peasants, with land or simply to take away, that is, without land?’

‘No, it’s not exactly the peasants,’ said Tchitchikov. ‘I want to have dead ones . . .’

‘What? Excuse me, I am a little deaf, I fancied I heard something very odd . . .’

‘I propose to purchase dead ones who would yet appear on the census list as alive,’ said Tchitchikov.

Manilov at that point dropped his pipe on the floor and stood with his mouth open for several minutes. The two friends, who had so lately been discussing the charms of friendship, remained motionless, staring at each other like those portraits which used in old days to be hung facing each other on each side of a looking-glass. At last Manilov picked up his pipe and looked up into his guest’s face, trying to discern whether there were not a smile on his lips, whether he were not joking; but there was no sign of anything of the sort, indeed his countenance looked more sedate than usual. Then he wondered whether his guest could by some chance have gone out of his mind, and in alarm looked at him intently; but his visitor’s eyes were perfectly clear; there was no wild uneasy gleam in them, such as is common in the eyes of a madman; all was decorum and propriety. However profoundly Manilov pondered how to take it and what to do, he could think of nothing but to blow out in a thin coil the smoke left in his mouth.

‘And so I should like to know whether you could transfer such peasants, not living in reality but living from the point of view of the law, or bestow them, or convey them as you may think best?’

But Manilov was so embarrassed and confused that he could only gaze at him.

‘I believe you see objections?’ observed Tchitchikov.

‘I? . . . no, it’s not that,’ said Manilov, ‘but pardon me . . . I cannot quite grasp it . . . I, of course, have not been so fortunate as to receive the brilliant education which is perceptible, one may say, in your every movement; I have no great art in expressing myself. Perhaps in this, in what you have just expressed, there is some hidden significance. Perhaps you have expressed yourself in this way as a figure of speech?’

‘No,’ Tchitchikov interposed. ‘No, I mean just what I say, that is, the souls which are really dead.’

Manilov was completely bewildered. He felt he ought to do something, to put some question, but what the devil to ask, he could not tell. He ended at last by blowing out smoke again, not from his mouth but through his nostrils.

‘And so if there are no obstacles we might, with God’s blessing, proceed to draw up a deed of sale,’ said Tchitchikov.

‘What . . . a sale of dead souls?’

‘Oh no,’ said Tchitchikov, ‘we shall write them as living, just as it actually stands in the census list. It is my habit never to depart one jot from the law; though I have had to suffer for that in the service, but pardon me: duty is for me a sacred thing, the law—before the law I am dumb.’

Manilov liked these last words but he had not the faintest inkling of what was meant, and, instead of answering, fell to sucking at his pipe so

vigorously that it began to wheeze like a bassoon. It seemed as though he were trying to draw out of it some opinion in regard to this incredible incident ; but the pipe wheezed—and nothing more.

‘ Perhaps you have some hesitation ? ’

‘ Oh, indeed, not the slightest ! I don’t say this as passing any criticism on you at all, but allow me to suggest, will not this undertaking or, to express it more precisely, negotiation—will not this negotiation be inconsistent with the civic code and ultimate welfare of Russia ? ’

At this point Manilov making a movement with his hand looked very significantly into Tchitchikov’s face, displaying in his tightly compressed lips and in all the features of his face an expression more profound than has perhaps ever been seen on the human countenance, unless indeed on that of some extremely wise minister at a critical moment in a most perplexing situation.

But Tchitchikov said that such an undertaking or negotiation would be in no way inconsistent with the civic code and ultimate welfare of Russia, and a minute later he added that the government would indeed gain by it as it would receive the legal fees.

‘ That is your opinion ? ’

‘ It is my opinion that it will be quite right.’

‘ Oh, if it is quite right that is another thing ; I have nothing against it,’ said Manilov, and he was completely reassured.

‘ Now we have only to agree upon the price . . . ’

‘ The price ? ’ inquired Manilov again, and he

stopped. 'Surely you don't imagine I am going to take money for souls which in a certain sense have ended their existence? Since you have conceived this, so to speak, fantastic desire, I am ready for my part to give them to you gratis, and will undertake the legal expenses myself.'

The historian of the foregoing events would be greatly to blame if he omitted to state that the visitor was overcome with delight at the words uttered by Manilov. Sober and dignified as he was, yet he could hardly refrain from executing a caper like a goat's, which, as we all know, is a demonstration confined to moments of acute delight. He wriggled about so violently in his chair that he slit the woollen material that covered the cushion; Manilov himself looked at him in some perplexity. Stirred by gratitude he poured out such a flood of thanks that Manilov was embarrassed, flushed crimson, made a deprecating movement with his head, and at last declared that it was really nothing, that he certainly would be glad to show in some way the heartfelt attraction, the magnetism of soul of which he was sensible; but that dead souls were in a sense utterly worthless.

'Not worthless at all,' said Tchitchikov, pressing his hand.

At this point a very deep sigh escaped him. It seemed that he was inclined to pour out his heart; not without feeling and expression, he uttered at last the following words:

'If only you knew the service that with those apparently worthless souls you are doing to a man

of no rank or family! What have I not suffered indeed! Like some ship on the stormy waves . . . what ill-usage, what persecution have I not endured, what grief have I not known! And for what? For having followed the path of justice, for being true to my conscience, for giving a helping hand to the forlorn widow and orphan in distress! . . .'

At this point he actually wiped away a tear with his handkerchief.

Manilov was deeply touched. The two friends spent a long time pressing each other's hands and gazing in silence into each other's eyes in which the tears were starting. Manilov would not let go of our hero's hand, but went on pressing it so warmly that the latter did not know how to release it. At last, stealthily withdrawing it, he said that it would not be amiss to draw up the deed of sale as soon as possible, and that it would be as well for him to pay a visit to the town himself; then he picked up his hat and began taking leave.

'What? You want to go already?' said Manilov, suddenly coming to himself and almost frightened.

At that moment Madame Manilov walked into the study.

'Lizanka,' said Manilov with a rather plaintive air, 'Pavel Ivanovitch is leaving us!'

'Because we have wearied Pavel Ivanovitch,' said Madame Manilov.

'Madam! Here,' said Tchitchikov, 'here is where . . .—he laid his hand on his heart—'Yes, here the delightful time I have spent with you will

be treasured! And, believe me, there could be no greater bliss than to live for ever, if not in the same house, at least in the near neighbourhood.'

'And you know, Pavel Ivanovitch,' said Manilov, who was highly delighted by this idea, 'how nice it would be really, if we could live like this together, under one roof, or in the shade of some elm-tree, discuss philosophy, go deeply into things! . . .'

'Oh, that would be paradise!' said Tchitchikov with a sigh. 'Farewell, madam,' he went on, kissing Madame Manilov's hand. 'Farewell, my honoured friend. Do not forget my request.'

'Oh, trust me!' answered Manilov, 'I am parting with you for no more than two days!'

They all went into the dining-room.

'Good-bye, sweet children!' said Tchitchikov, seeing Alkides and Themistoclus, who were busy over a wooden soldier which had neither arms nor nose. 'Good-bye, my darlings, you must forgive me for not having brought you any presents, for I must own that I did not even know of your existence; but now I will certainly bring you some when I come again. I will bring you a sword; would you like a sword?'

'Yes,' answered Themistoclus.

'And you a drum. You would like a drum, wouldn't you?' Tchitchikov went on, bending down to Alkides.

'Yes,' Alkides answered in a whisper, hanging his head.

'Very well, I'll bring you a drum, such a lovely drum; it will go: Toorrrr . . . roo . . . tra-ta-

ta, ta-ta-ta. Good-bye, my dear! Good-bye!’ Then he kissed the child on the head and turned to Manilov and his wife with the little laugh with which people commonly insinuate to parents the innocence of their children’s desires.

‘You really must stay, Pavel Ivanovitch!’ said Manilov when they had gone out on the steps. ‘Look what storm-clouds.’

‘They are only little ones,’ answered Tchitchikov.

‘And do you know the way to Sobakevitch’s?’

‘I wanted to ask you about it.’

‘If you will allow me, I will tell your coachman at once.’

And Manilov proceeded with the same politeness to explain the way to the coachman.

The coachman, hearing that he had to pass two turnings and take the third, said: ‘We shall find it, your honour.’

And Tchitchikov drove away while the gentleman and lady left behind stood for a long time on tiptoe on the steps, sending greetings after him and waving their handkerchiefs.

Manilov watched the chaise disappearing into the distance, and even after it was completely out of sight, still went on standing on the steps, smoking his pipe. At last he went into the house, sat down to the table and gave himself up to meditation, genuinely delighted at having given his visitor pleasure. Then his thoughts passed imperceptibly to other subjects, and goodness knows where they landed at last. He mused on the bliss

of a life spent in friendship, thought how nice it would be to live with a friend on some bank of a river, then a bridge began to rise across the river, then an immense house with such a high belvedere that one could see even Moscow from it, and then he dreamed of drinking tea there in the evenings in the open air and discussing agreeable subjects. Then he dreamed that he and Tchitchikov drove in fine carriages to some party, where they charmed every one by the agreeableness of their behaviour, and that the Tsar, hearing of their great friendship, made them both generals, and so passed into goodness knows what visions, such as he could not clearly make out himself. Tchitchikov's strange request suddenly cut across all his dreams. It seemed as though his brain could not assimilate the idea, and however much he turned it about he could not explain it to himself, and so he sat on, smoking his pipe till supper-time.

CHAPTER III

MEANWHILE Tchitchikov in a contented frame of mind was sitting in his chaise which had for some time been rolling along the high-road. From the foregoing chapter it can now be seen what was the chief subject of his interests and inclinations, and so it is not surprising that he was soon completely absorbed in it. The suppositions, calculations, and reflections of which signs passed over his face were evidently very agreeable, for at every moment traces of a gratified smile were left by them. Engrossed in them, he paid no attention to the fact that his coachman, well satisfied with the reception given him by Manilov's servants, was making very sagacious observations to the dappled-grey trace-horse harnessed on the right side. This dappled-grey horse was extremely sly and only made a show of pulling, while the bay in the shafts and the other trace-horse, of a chestnut colour and called the Assessor because it had been purchased from some tax assessor, worked with all their hearts, so that the satisfaction they derived from it was actually perceptible in their eyes.

'Be as sly as you like! I'll be even with you!' said Selifan, rising in his seat and lashing the laggard with his whip. 'You mind your job, you German pantaloons! The bay is a gentle-

manly horse, he does his duty; I'll be glad to give him an extra handful, for he is a gentlemanly horse, and the Assessor, he is a good horse too. . . . Now then, why are you shaking your ears? You should listen when you are spoken to, you fool! I am not going to teach you any harm, you dunce. There, where is he off to?' Here he lashed him, observing: 'Ugh, you savage! you damned Bonaparte! . . .'

Then he shouted at all of them :

'Hey, you darlings!' And he gave a flick to all three, not by way of punishment but to show that he was pleased with them. After having gratified himself in this way he again addressed the dappled trace-horse: 'You think you will hide your conduct. No, you must act straightforwardly, if you want to be treated with respect. At that landowner's now where we have been there are good folks. I am always glad to talk to a good man; a good man and I can always get on together, we are always close friends. Whether it's drinking a cup of tea with anybody or taking a snack of something, I do it with relish if he's a good man. Every one pays respect to a good man. Here's our master now, every one respects him because he has served his Tsar, do you hear, he is a collegiate councillor . . .'

Reasoning in this way Selifan rose at last to the most abstract generalisations. If Tchitchikov had been listening, he would have learned many details relating to himself. But his thoughts were so engrossed with his pet idea that nothing but a

loud clap of thunder made him rouse himself and look about him. The whole sky was completely covered with clouds and the dusty high-road was being sprinkled with drops of rain. Then there came a second clap of thunder louder and nearer and the rain spurted down in bucketfuls. At first falling in a slanting direction, it lashed on one side of the chaise, then on the other; then, changing its direction and coming down quite straight, it pattered on the roof of the carriage; and finally drops spurted straight into our hero's face. This made him draw the leather curtains, with two little round windows in them to give a view of the road, and tell Selifan to drive faster. Selifan, interrupted in the middle of his talk, realised that it certainly would not do to dawdle, pulled out from under the box seat some ragged garment of grey cloth, put it on, snatched up the reins, and shouted at his horses, who were scarcely moving their legs, for they felt agreeably relaxed by his edifying admonitions. But Selifan could not remember whether he had passed two, or three, turnings. On reflecting and recalling the road, he surmised that he had passed many. As in critical moments a Russian always decides what to do without further reflection, he turned to the right at the next cross-road and, shouting 'Hey, honoured friends!' put his horses into a gallop without considering long where the road he had taken might lead them.

The rain however seemed as though it would go on for hours. The dust lying on the high-road was soon churned into mud and it seemed harder

every minute for the horses to draw the chaise. Tchitchikov was beginning to feel very uneasy at still seeing no sign of Sobakevitch's village. According to his calculations they ought to have arrived long before. He kept looking out on either side, but it was so dark that you could not see your hand before your face.

'Selifan,' he said at last, poking his head out of the chaise.

'What is it, master?' answered Selifan.

'Look out, isn't there a village in sight?'

'No, master, there is nothing in sight anywhere!' After which Selifan, brandishing his whip, struck up—not precisely a song but a sort of long rigmarole without an ending. Everything went into it: all the calls of encouragement and incitement with which horses are regaled all over Russia from one end to the other, adjectives of all kinds without discrimination just as they came first to his tongue. It came at last to his beginning to call them secretaries.

Meanwhile Tchitchikov began to notice that the chaise was swaying in all directions and jolting him violently: this made him aware that they had turned off the road and were probably jolting over a freshly harrowed field. Selifan seemed to perceive this himself but did not say a word.

'Why, you scoundrel, what road are you taking me?' said Tchitchikov.

'I can't help it, sir, it is such weather; there is no seeing the whip, it is so dark!'

As he said this, he gave the chaise such a lurch

that Tchitchikov had to hold on with both hands. It was only then that he noticed that Selifan had been making merry.

‘Take care, take care, you’ll upset us!’ he shouted to him.

‘No, master, how can I upset you?’ said Selifan. ‘It wouldn’t be right to upset you, I know that myself; I won’t upset you for anything.’

Then he began slightly turning the chaise: he turned it and turned it till at last he tipped it on its side. Tchitchikov went splash on his hands and knees into the mud. Selifan stopped the horses, however; though they would have stopped of themselves for they were exhausted. This unforeseen mishap completely bewildered him. Clambering off the box he stood facing the chaise with his arms akimbo, while his master was floundering in the mud, trying to scramble out of it, and said after some pondering: ‘Well, I never did! it has upset, too!’

‘You are as drunk as a cobbler!’ said Tchitchikov.

‘No, master, how could I be drunk! I know that it is not the right thing to be drunk. I had a chat with a friend, because one may have a chat with a good man, there is no harm in that,—and we had a snack together. There is nothing to hurt in a snack: one can take a snack of something with a good man.’

‘And what did I tell you last time when you got [drunk, eh? have you forgotten?’ said Tchitchikov.

‘No, your honour, as though I could forget! I know my duty. I know it is not right to get drunk. I had a chat with a good man because . . .’

‘I will give you a thrashing that will teach you to have a chat with a good man.’

‘That is as your honour thinks best,’ answered Selifan, ready to agree to anything, ‘if it’s to be a thrashing, a thrashing let it be; I have nothing against it. Why not a thrashing, if it’s deserved? That’s what you are master for. There must be thrashing, for the peasants are too fond of their ease; order must be kept up. If it’s deserved, then thrash, why not thrash?’

His master found absolutely no reply to make to this line of argument. But at that instant it seemed as though fate itself had determined to take pity on them. They heard a dog barking in the distance. Tchitchikov, overjoyed, told Selifan to whip up the horses. The Russian driver has a keen scent that takes the place of eyes; that is how it is he jolts along at full speed with his eyes shut and always arrives somewhere in the end. Though Selifan could not see his hand before his face, he drove the horses so straight to the village that he didn’t stop till the shafts of the chaise struck against a fence and he could absolutely drive no further. All Tchitchikov could discern through the thick curtain of streaming rain was something that looked like a roof. He sent Selifan to seek for the gate, an operation which would undoubtedly have taken a long time if it were not that in Russia ferocious dogs do duty for house-porters, and

these proclaimed its whereabouts so loudly that he put his fingers into his ears. There was a gleam of light in one little window which sent a misty glimmer as far as the fence and showed our travellers the gate. Selifan fell to knocking and soon a figure clad in a smock was thrust out at the gate, and the master and his servant heard a husky female voice ask: 'Who is knocking? Why do you make such a row?'

'We are travellers, my good woman, put us up for the night,' answered Tchitchikov.

'Well, you are a sharp one,' said the old woman, 'what a time to come! This isn't an inn: this is a lady's place.'

'What can we do, my good woman? You see we have lost our way. We can't spend the night on the steppe in such weather.'

'Yes, it is dark weather, it is not good weather,' added Selifan.

'Hold your tongue, you fool,' said Tchitchikov.

'Why, who are you?' said the old woman.

'A nobleman, my good woman.'

The word nobleman seemed to make the old woman consider a little. 'Wait a minute, I will tell the mistress,' she said, and two minutes later she came back with a lantern in her hand. The gates were opened. There was a gleam of light in another window. Driving into the yard the chaise stopped before a little house which it was difficult to make out in the darkness. Only one half of it was lighted up by the light from the window; a pool in front of the house on which

the light fell directly was also visible. The rain was pattering noisily on the wooden roof and running in gurgling streams into the water-butt. Meanwhile the dogs were barking on every possible note: one throwing up its head executed a howl as prolonged and brought it out with as much effort as though it were getting a handsome salary for it; another snapped it out quickly like a sacristan, and between them there rang out like the bell of a post-cart an indefatigable falsetto, most likely of a young puppy, and it was completed by a bass, possibly an old fellow endowed with a sturdy doggy nature, for he was as husky as the bass in a choir when the concert is in full swing: when the tenors rise on tiptoe in their intense desire to bring out a high note, and all heads are flung back and straining upwards, while he alone, with his unshaven chin thrust into his cravat, squatting and almost sinking to the floor, lets out a note that sets the window-panes shaking and tinkling. From the mere barking of the dogs that made up such an orchestra it might be surmised that the village was a decent one; but our drenched and chilled hero thought of nothing but his bed. The chaise had not quite stopped when he leapt out on to the steps, gave a lurch, and almost fell down. Another woman, somewhat younger than the first, but very much like her, came out on to the steps. She led him into the house. Tchitchikov took two cursory glances at the room: it was hung with old striped paper; there were pictures of birds; between the windows there

were little old-fashioned looking-glasses with dark frames in the shape of turned-back leaves ; behind each looking-glass was stuffed either a letter or an old pack of cards or a stocking ; there was a clock on the wall with flowers painted on the face, but he could distinguish nothing more. He felt that his eyelids were sticking together as though some one had smeared them with honey. A minute later the mistress of the house walked in, an elderly woman in some sort of nightcap hurriedly put on and with a piece of flannel round her neck, one of those good dames owning a small estate, who lament over the failure of their crops and their losses and hold their heads a little on one side, and yet little by little put away a tidy sum of money in different drawers of their chests. In one little bag they save up all the roubles, in another the half roubles, in a third the quarter roubles, though it looks as though there were nothing in the chest but underlinen and night-jackets and reels of cotton and an unpicked pelisse, intended to be turned into a dress later on, if the old one should be scorched in frying the holiday cakes, doughnuts, and fritters of all sorts, or should be worn out of itself. But the dress does not get scorched and is not worn out, the old lady is careful, and the pelisse is destined to lie unpicked for years and then to come later on to a niece, together with all sorts of other rubbish.

Tchitchikov apologised for disturbing her with his unexpected visit.

‘ It ’s all right, it ’s all right ! ’ said the old lady.

‘In what weather God has brought you! Such a storm of wind and rain. . . . You ought to have something to eat after your journey, but it is night-time, we can’t cook anything.’

Her words were interrupted by a strange hissing sound so that Tchitchikov was somewhat alarmed: the sound suggested that the whole room was full of snakes, but glancing upwards he was reassured, for he noticed that the clock on the wall was disposed to strike. The hissing was followed at once by a wheezing, and at last with a desperate effort it struck two o’clock with a sound as though some one were hitting a broken pot with a stick, after which the pendulum returned to its tranquil ticking, to right and to left.

Tchitchikov thanked the old lady, saying that he wanted nothing, that she was not to put herself out, that he asked for nothing but a bed and was only curious to know to what place he had come, and whether it was far from here to the estate of Sobakevitch. To which the old lady replied that she had never heard the name and that there was no such landowner.

‘You know Manilov, anyway?’ said Tchitchikov.

‘Why, who is Manilov?’

‘A landowner, ma’am.’

‘No, I have never heard of him, there is no such landowner here.’

‘Who are the landowners here?’

‘Bobrov, Svinyin, Kanapatyev, Harpakin, Trepakin, Plyeshakov.’

‘Are they well-to-do people?’

‘No, my good sir, not very well-to-do. One has twenty souls, another thirty; but there are none about here with as many as a hundred.’

Tchitchikov perceived that he had come quite into the wilds.

‘Is it far to the town, anyway?’

‘It will be some forty miles. What a pity I have nothing to give you! Won’t you have a cup of tea, my good sir?’

‘No thank you, ma’am, I want nothing but a bed.’

‘After such a journey you must need a rest indeed. You can lie down here, my good sir, on this sofa. Hey, Fetinya, bring a feather bed, pillows, and a sheet. What weather God has sent us: such thunder—I have had a light burning before the holy image all night. Oh, my good sir, why, all your back and side is muddy as a hog’s; where have you got so dirty?’

‘It’s a mercy that I am only muddy. I must be thankful that I did not break my ribs.’

‘Holy Saints, how dreadful! But shouldn’t your back be rubbed with something?’

‘Thank you, thank you. Don’t trouble, but only bid your maid dry my clothes and brush them.’

‘Do you hear, Fetinya?’ said the old lady, addressing the woman who had come out on to the steps with a light and who had now dragged in a feather bed and, beating it up on both sides, was scattering a perfect shower of feathers all over the room. ‘You take the gentleman’s coat

together with his under-things, and first dry them before the fire as you used to do for the master, and afterwards give them a good brushing and beating.'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Fetinya, spreading a sheet over the feather bed and laying the pillows on it.

'Well, here 's your bed ready,' said the old lady. 'Good-bye, sir, I wish you good-night, but is there nothing you would like? Perhaps you are accustomed, my good sir, to have some one tickle your heels at night? My poor dear husband could never get to sleep without it.'

But the visitor refused the heel-tickling also. The lady of the house retired and he made haste at once to undress, giving Fetinya all his garments, upper and lower, and Fetinya, wishing him a good-night too, carried off his wet array. Left alone he glanced with satisfaction at his bed which almost reached the ceiling. Fetinya was evidently a mistress of the art of beating up feathers. When, putting a chair beside it, he climbed on to the bed, it sank almost to the floor under his weight, and the feathers squeezed out of the cover flew into every corner of the room. Putting out the candle he drew the cotton quilt over him and, curling up under it, fell asleep that very minute. He woke rather late next morning. The sun was shining straight into his face, and the flies which had the night before been quietly asleep on the walls and the ceiling were all paying attention to him: one was sitting on his lip, another on his ear,

a third was trying to settle on his eye ; one who had had the indiscretion to settle close to his nostril he had in his sleep drawn up into his nose, which set him sneezing violently—the circumstance which caused him to wake up. Looking about the room he noticed now that the pictures were not all of birds : among them hung a portrait of Kutuzov, and an old gentleman painted in oils with red revers on his uniform as worn in the reign of Paul I. The clock again emitted a hissing sound and struck ten : a woman's face peeped in at the door, and instantly withdrew seeing that Tchitchikov had flung off absolutely everything to sleep more at his ease. The face that peeped in seemed to him somehow familiar. He began trying to recall who it was and at last remembered that it was the mistress of the house. He put on his shirt ; his clothes, dried and brushed, were lying beside him. After dressing he went up to the looking-glass and sneezed again so loudly that a turkey-cock who had come up to the window at that moment—the window was very near the ground—gabbled something very quickly to him in his queer language, probably 'God bless you,' on which Tchitchikov called him a fool. Going to the window he scrutinised the view before him ; the window might be said to look into the poultry yard. At least the narrow little yard that lay before him was filled with fowls and domestic animals of all sorts. There were turkeys and hens beyond all reckoning ; among them a cock was strutting about with measured steps, shaking his

comb and turning his head on one side as though listening to something ; a sow too was there with her family ; poking about in a heap of litter, she ate a chicken in passing and, without noticing it, went on gobbling melon rinds as before. This little yard was shut in by a paling fence beyond which stretched a spacious kitchen garden with cabbages, onions, potatoes, beetroot, and other vegetables. Apple trees and other fruit trees were dotted here and there about the kitchen garden and were covered with nets to protect them from the magpies and sparrows, the latter of which were flitting from place to place in perfect clouds. With the same end in view, several scarecrows had been rigged up on long posts with outstretched arms ; one of them was adorned with a cap belonging to the mistress of the house herself. Beyond the kitchen garden there were peasants' huts which, though placed at random and not arranged in straight rows, yet from what Tchitchikov could observe showed the prosperity of their inhabitants, for they were well kept : where the wood on the roof had rotted it had everywhere been replaced by new ; the gates were nowhere on the slant, and, in the peasants' covered sheds turned towards him, he noticed in one an almost new cart and in another even two.

‘Why, she hasn't such a very little village,’ he said, and at once resolved to have a good talk with the lady of the house and to make her closer acquaintance. He glanced through the crack of the door from which her head had appeared and, seeing her

sitting at the tea-table in the next room, went in to her with a good-humoured and friendly air.

‘Good-morning, my good sir. How have you slept?’ said the old lady, getting up from her seat. She was better dressed than she had been the night before, in a dark gown, and wore no night-cap, but she still had something wrapped round her neck.

‘Very well, very well indeed,’ said Tchitchikov, seating himself in an easy-chair. ‘And what sort of a night had you, ma’am?’

‘Very bad, sir.’

‘How’s that?’

‘It’s sleeplessness. My back keeps aching and my leg above the knee is painful too.’

‘That will pass, that will pass, ma’am. You mustn’t take any notice of that.’

‘God grant it may; I’ve rubbed it with lard and bathed it with turpentine. And what do you take with your tea? There’s home-made wine in that bottle.’

‘That’s not amiss, ma’am. We will have a drop of home-made wine too.’

The reader has, I imagine, already observed that in spite of his friendly air Tchitchikov spoke with more freedom and easiness than with Manilov and did not stand on ceremony at all. It must be said that if we in Russia have not caught up foreigners in other things, we have far outstripped them in the knowledge of how to behave. All the shades and subtleties of our manners cannot be counted. A Frenchman or a German would never

catch and understand all its peculiarities and distinctions ; he will speak in almost the same tone of voice and almost the same language to a millionaire and to a little tobacconist, though of course in his soul he will grovel quite sufficiently before the former. It is not so with us : there are among us persons so clever that they can talk to a landowner with two hundred souls quite differently from the way in which they speak to one with three hundred ; and to the one with three hundred they will speak differently again from the manner in which they will address one with five hundred ; and to one with five hundred they do not talk as they do to one with eight hundred ; in short there are shades all up to a million. Let us suppose, for instance, that there is a government office—not here but in some fairy kingdom—and let us suppose that in the office there is a head of the office. I beg you to look at him when he is sitting among his subordinates—one is simply too awe-stricken to utter a word. Pride and dignity . . . and what else is not expressed upon his face ? You should take a brush and paint him : a Prometheus, a perfect Prometheus ! He looks like an eagle, he moves with a measured step. That very eagle, when he has left his own room and is approaching the sanctum of his chief, flutters along like a partridge with papers under his arm as best he may. In company and at an evening-party if all present are of a low rank, Prometheus remains Prometheus, but if they are ever so little above him, Prometheus undergoes a metamorphosis such

as Ovid never imagined: he is a fly, less than a fly indeed, he humbles himself into the dust! 'But this isn't Ivan Petrovitch,' you say, looking at him. 'Ivan Petrovitch is taller, and this fellow is both short and thin; Ivan Petrovitch talks in a loud bass voice and never laughs, while there is no making this fellow out, he pipes like a bird and keeps laughing.' You go near, you look, it really is Ivan Petrovitch! 'Aha!' you think to yourself. . . . However, we will return to the characters of our story.

Tchitchikov, as we have seen already, had made up his mind not to stand on ceremony at all, and so, taking the cup of tea in his hand and pouring some home-made wine into it, he spoke as follows:

'You have a nice little village, ma'am. How many souls in it?'

'Close upon eighty, my good sir,' said his hostess. 'But the times are bad, I am sorry to say. Last year, too, we had such a bad harvest, as I never wish to see again.'

'The peasants look sturdy enough, though, and their huts are solid. Allow me to ask your surname. I was so distracted . . . arriving in the night . . .'

'Korobotchka.'

'Thank you very much, and your Christian name and father's name?'

'Nastasya Petrovna.'

'Nastasya Petrovna? A good name, Nastasya Petrovna; I have an aunt, my mother's sister, called Nastasya Petrovna.'

‘And what is your name?’ asked the lady.
‘You are a tax assessor, for sure?’

‘No, ma’am,’ answered Tchitchikov, grinning, ‘not a tax assessor for sure, but just travelling on a little business of my own.’

‘Oh, then you are a dealer! What a pity, really, that I sold my honey to the merchants so cheap; very likely you would have bought it from me, sir.’

‘Your honey I shouldn’t have bought.’

‘What else then? Hemp perhaps? But there, I have very little hemp now, not more than half a pood.’

‘No, ma’am, I buy a different sort of ware. Tell me, have any of your peasants died?’

‘Oh, sir, eighteen of them,’ said the old lady, sighing, ‘and such a good lot died, all workmen. It’s true that some have been born since, but what use are they? They are all such small fry. And the assessor came—you must pay the tax by the soul, said he. The peasants are dead, but I must pay as though they were alive. Last week my blacksmith was burnt, such a clever blacksmith and he could do locksmith’s work too.’

‘Did you have a fire, ma’am?’

‘God preserve us from such a misfortune; a fire would be worse still: he caught fire of himself, my good sir. His inside somehow began burning, he had had a terrible lot to drink: all I can say is that a blue flame came out of him and he smouldered and smouldered away and turned black as a coal; and he was such a very clever blacksmith!’

And now I can't drive about, I have no one to shoe my horses.'

'It is all God's will, ma'am,' said Tchitchikov with a sigh, 'it is no use murmuring against the wisdom of God. . . . Let me have them, Nastasya Petrovna.'

'Have whom, sir?'

'Why, all those who are dead.'

'Why, how let you have them?'

'Oh, quite simply. Or if you like sell them, I'll pay you for them.'

'Why, how's that, I really don't take your meaning. Surely you don't want to dig them out of the ground, do you?'

Tchitchikov saw that the old lady was quite at sea, and that he absolutely must explain what he wanted. In a few words he explained to her that the transfer or purchase would take place only on paper and that the souls would be described as though alive.

'But what use will they be to you?' said the old lady, looking at him with round eyes.

'That's my business.'

'But you know they are dead.'

'Well, who says they are alive? That's just why they are a loss to you, that they are dead: you have to pay the tax on them, but now I will save you from all that trouble and expense. Do you understand? And I will not only do that, but give you fifteen roubles besides. Well, is it clear now?'

'I really don't know,' the old lady brought out

hesitatingly, 'you see I've never sold the dead before.'

'I should think not! It would be a wonder indeed if you could sell them to any one. Or do you suppose that there is some profit to be made out of them, really?'

'No, I don't suppose that! What profit could there be in them? They are no use at all. The only thing that troubles me is that they are dead.'

'Well, the woman's thick-headed, it seems,' Tchitchikov thought to himself. 'Listen, ma'am, just look at it fairly yourself: you are being ruined, paying for them as though they were living . . .'

'Oh, my good sir, don't speak about it,' the old lady caught him up. 'Only the week before last I paid more than a hundred and fifty, besides presents to the assessor.'

'There you see, ma'am! And now take into consideration the mere fact that you won't have to make presents to the assessor again, because now I shall have to pay for them,—I and not you; I take all the taxes on myself, I will even pay all the legal expenses, do you understand that?'

The old lady pondered. She saw that the transaction certainly seemed a profitable one, only it was too novel and unusual, and so she began to be extremely uneasy that the purchaser might be trying to cheat her. God knows where he had come from, and he had arrived in the middle of the night, too.

'Well, ma'am, how is it to be then, is it a bargain?' said Tchitchikov.

‘ Upon my word, sir, it has never yet happened to me to sell the dead. The year before last I did sell some living ones, two girls to Protopopov, two girls for a hundred roubles each, and very grateful he was for them too : they have turned out capital girls to work ; they even weave table napkins.’

‘ Well, it is not a question of the living ; God bless them ! I am asking for the dead.’

‘ Really, at first sight, I am afraid that it may be a loss to me. Perhaps you are deceiving me, sir, and they, er . . . are worth more, perhaps.’

‘ Listen, my good woman . . . ech, what nonsense you talk ! What can they be worth ? Just consider : why, they are dust, you know. Do you understand, they are nothing but dust. Take the most worthless, humblest article, a simple rag for instance—and even the rag has a value : rags are bought for making into paper, anyway, but what I am speaking of is of no use for anything. Come, tell me yourself, what is it of use for ?’

‘ That is true, certainly. They are of no use for anything at all. The only thing that makes me hesitate is that, you see, they are dead.’

‘ Ugh, she is as stupid as a post,’ said Tchitchikov to himself, beginning to lose patience. ‘ However is one to come to terms with her ! She makes me feel hot all over, the confounded old woman !’ And, taking a handkerchief out of his pocket, he began mopping his perspiring brow. Tchitchikov need not have been moved to anger, however : many a highly respected man, many a statesman indeed, is a regular Korobotchka in business. Once he

has taken a notion into his head there is no getting over it, anyhow: however many arguments as clear as daylight you put before him, they all rebound from him as an india-rubber ball bounces from a wall.

After mopping his brow Tchitchikov made up his mind to try whether he could not get round her from some other side.

‘Either you don’t want to understand what I say, ma’am, or you talk like that, simply for the sake of saying something. I’ll give you fifteen paper roubles—do you understand? That’s money, you know. You won’t pick it up in the road. Come, let me know what you sold your honey for?’

‘Twelve roubles a pood.’

‘You are taking a little sin upon your soul, ma’am, you didn’t sell it for twelve roubles.’

‘Upon my word, I did.’

‘Well, do you see? That was for something—it was honey. You had been collecting it perhaps for about a year with work and trouble and anxiety, you went and killed the bees, and fed the bees in the cellar all the winter. But dead souls are not a thing of this world at all. In this case, you have taken no trouble whatever about them, it was God’s will that they should leave this world to the loss of your estate. In the case of the honey, for your work, for your exertions you have received twelve roubles, but in this case you will get gratis, for nothing, not twelve but fifteen roubles, and not in silver but all in blue notes.’

After these powerful arguments Tchitchikov had no doubt that the old lady would give way.

‘Really,’ answered the old lady, ‘I am an inexperienced widow; I had better wait a little, maybe the dealers will be coming and I shall find out about prices.’

‘For shame, my good woman, it is simply shameful. Come, just think over what you are saying. Who is going to buy them? Why, what use could any one put them to?’

‘Well, perhaps they may be put to some use somehow . . . ,’ replied the old lady, but she broke off and gazed open-mouthed at him, almost with horror, waiting to see what he would say to it.

‘Dead men be put to some use! Ugh, what next! To scare the sparrows at night in your kitchen garden or what?’

‘God have mercy on us! What dreadful things you do say!’ said the old lady, crossing herself.

‘What else do you want to do with them? Besides, the bones and the graves, all that will be left to you; the transfer is only on paper. Well, what do you say? How is it to be? Give me an answer, anyway.’

The old lady pondered again.

‘What are you thinking about, Nastasya Petrovna?’

‘I really can’t make up my mind what to do; I had really better sell you my hemp.’

‘Hemp! Upon my soul, I asked you about something quite different and you foist hemp upon me. Hemp is hemp, another time I’ll come

and take your hemp, too. So how is it to be, Nastasya Petrovna ?’

‘ Oh dear, it is such a strange, quite unheard-of thing to sell.’

At this point Tchitchikov was completely driven out of all patience ; he banged his chair upon the floor in his anger and consigned her to the devil.

The old lady was extremely frightened of the devil.

‘ Oh, don’t speak of him, God bless him !’ she cried, turning quite pale. ‘ Only the night before last I was dreaming all night of the evil spirit. I took a fancy to try my fortune on the cards after saying my prayers that night, and it seems the Lord sent him to punish me. He looked so horrid and his horns were longer than our bull’s.’

‘ I wonder you don’t dream of them by dozens. From simple Christian humanity I wanted to help you : I saw a poor woman struggling and in poverty. . . . But the plague take you and all your village !’

‘ Oh, what shocking words you are using !’ said the old lady, looking at him with horror.

‘ Well, there is no knowing how to talk to you ! Why, you are like some—not to use a bad word—dog in the manger that won’t eat the hay itself and won’t let others. I was meaning to buy all sorts of produce from you, for I take government contracts too . . .’

This was a lie, though quite a casual one, uttered with no ulterior design, but it was unexpectedly successful. The government contract produced a

strong effect on Nastasya Petrovna. Anyway she brought out, in a voice of supplication almost :

‘But why are you in such a terrible rage? If I had known before that you were so hot-tempered I wouldn’t have contradicted you.’

‘There’s nothing to be angry about! The business is not worth a rotten egg, as though I should get in a rage about it!’

‘Oh, very well then, I am ready to let you have them for fifteen paper roubles! Only, my good sir, about these contracts, mind, if you should be taking my rye or buckwheat flour or my grain or my carcasses, please don’t cheat me.’

‘No, my good woman, I won’t cheat you,’ he said, while he wiped away the perspiration that was streaming down his face. He began inquiring whether she had any lawyer in the town or friend whom she could authorise to complete the purchase and do everything necessary.’

‘To be sure! The son of the chief priest, Father Kirill, is a clerk in the law-court,’ said the old lady. Tchitchikov asked her to write a letter of authorisation to him, and, to save unnecessary trouble, undertook to compose it himself.

‘It would be a good thing,’ the old lady was thinking to herself meanwhile, ‘if he would take my flour and cattle for the government. I must soften his heart: there is some dough left from yesterday evening, so I’ll go and tell Fetinya to make some pancakes; it would be a good thing to make an egg turnover too. They make turnovers capitally and it doesn’t take long to do.’

The old woman departed to carry out her idea about the turnovers, and probably to complete it with other masterpieces of domestic baking and cookery ; while Tchitchikov went into the drawing-room in which he had spent the night, in order to get the necessary papers out of his case. The drawing-room had been swept and dusted long before, the luxurious feather bed had been carried away, before the sofa stood a table laid for a meal. Putting his case upon it he paused for a little while, for he felt that he was wet with perspiration as though he were in a river : everything he had on from his shirt to his stockings was soaked.

‘ Ugh ! how she has wearied me, the confounded old woman ! ’ he said, resting for a little before he opened the case. The author is persuaded that there are readers so inquisitive as to be desirous of knowing the plan and internal arrangement of the case. By all means, why not satisfy them ? This was the internal arrangement : in the very middle was a box for soap ; above the soap-box six or seven narrow divisions for razors ; then square places for a sand-box and an ink-pot, with a little boat hollowed out between them for pens, sealing-wax, and things that were rather longer ; then various divisions with covers and without covers for things that were shorter, full of visiting cards, funeral cards, theatre tickets, and other things kept as souvenirs. All the upper tray with its little divisions lifted out, and under it there was a space filled with packets of sheets of paper ; then followed a little secret drawer for

money, which came out from the side of the case. It always came out so quickly and was moved back at the same minute by Tchitchikov, so that one could not tell for certain how much money there was in it. He set to work at once, and mending a pen began to write. At that moment the old lady came in.

‘You have a nice box there,’ said she, sitting down beside him, ‘I’ll be bound you bought it in Moscow?’

‘Yes, in Moscow,’ said Tchitchikov, going on writing.

‘I knew it; the work there is always good. The year before last my sister brought me little warm boots for the children from there: such good material, it has lasted till now. Oh la! what a lot of stamped paper you have in it!’ she went on, peeping into the case. And there certainly was a good deal of stamped paper in it. ‘You might make me a present of a sheet or two! I am so badly off for it; if I want to send in a petition to the court I have nothing to write it on.’

Tchitchikov explained to her that the paper was not the right sort for that, that it was meant for drawing up deeds of purchase and not for petitions. To satisfy her, however, he gave her a sheet worth a rouble. After writing the letter he gave it to her to sign and asked her for a little list of the peasants. It appeared that the old lady kept no lists or records, but knew them all by heart. He made her dictate their names to him. He was astonished at some of the peasants’ surnames and still more at their

nicknames, so much so that he paused on hearing them before beginning to write. He was particularly struck by one Pyotr Savelyev Ne-uvazhay-Koryto (Never mind the Trough), so that he could not help saying: 'What a long name.' Another had attached to his name Korovy-Kirpitch (Cow's Brick), another simply appeared as Ivan Koleso (Wheel). When he had finished writing he drew in the air through his nose and sniffed a seductive fragrance of something fried in butter.

'Pray come and have lunch,' said the old lady. Tchitchikov looked round and saw that the table was already spread with mushrooms, pies, fritters, cheesecakes, doughnuts, pancakes, open tarts with all sorts of different fillings, some with onions, some with poppy seeds, some with curds, and some with fish, and there is no knowing what else.

'Some egg pie?' said his hostess.

Tchitchikov drew up to the pie and, after consuming a little more than half of it on the spot, praised it. And the pie was indeed savoury, and after all his worry with the old lady seemed still more so.

'Some pancakes?' said his hostess.

In reply to this Tchitchikov folded three pancakes together and, moistening them in melted butter, directed them towards his mouth and then wiped his lips and hands with a table napkin. After repeating this operation three times, he asked his hostess to order the chaise to be brought round. Nastasya Petrovna at once despatched Fetinya,

bidding her at the same time to bring in some more pancakes.

‘Your pancakes are very nice, ma’am,’ said Tchitchikov, attacking the hot ones as they were brought in.

‘Yes, they fry them very nicely,’ said the old lady, ‘but the worst of it is that the harvest is poor and the flour is so unprofitable. . . . But why are you in such a hurry?’ she said, seeing that Tchitchikov was taking up his cap. ‘Why, the horses are not in yet.’

‘They soon will be, ma’am, my servants don’t take long to get ready.’

‘Well, then, please don’t forget about the government contracts.’

‘I won’t forget, I won’t forget,’ said Tchitchikov, going out into the passage.

‘And won’t you buy salt pork?’ said the old lady, following him.

‘Why not? I’ll certainly buy it, only later.’

‘I shall have salt pork by Easter.’

‘We’ll buy it, we’ll buy everything, we’ll buy salt pork too.’

‘Perhaps you’ll be wanting feathers. I shall have feathers too, by St. Philip’s fast.’

‘Very good, very good,’ said Tchitchikov.

‘There you see, my good sir, your chaise isn’t ready yet,’ said his hostess when they had gone out on to the steps.

‘It will be, it will be directly. Only tell me how to reach the high-road.’

‘How am I to do that?’ said the old lady. ‘It

is hard to explain, there are so many turnings ; perhaps I had better let you have a girl to show you the way. You have room, I daresay, on the box.'

'To be sure we have.'

'Very well, I'll let you have a little girl, she knows the way ; only mind you don't carry her off, some merchants have carried off one of mine already.'

Tchitchikov assured her that he would not carry off the girl, and Madame Korobotchka, reassured, began scanning everything that was going on in her yard. She stared at the housekeeper who was bringing a wooden tub of honey out of the storeroom, at a peasant who appeared at the gate, and, little by little, was completely re-absorbed in the life of her farm. But why spend so long over Madame Korobotchka ? Enough of Madame Korobotchka and Madame Manilov, of their well-ordered or ill-ordered lives ! Or—as it is so strangely ordained in this world—what is amusing will turn into being gloomy, if you stand too long before it, and then God knows what ideas may not stray into the mind. Perhaps one may even begin thinking : ' But, after all, is Madame Korobotchka so low down on the endless ladder of human perfectibility ? ' Is there really such a vast chasm separating her from her sister, who, inaccessibly immured within the walls of her aristocratic house with its perfumed cast-iron staircases, its shining copper fittings, its mahogany and carpets, yawns over her unfinished book while she waits to pay

her visits in witty fashionable society. There she has a field in which to display her intelligence and express the views she has learnt by heart—not ideas of her own, about her household and her estate, both neglected and in disorder, thanks to her ignorance of housekeeping and farming—but those opinions that by fashion's decree interest the town for a whole week, ideas about the political revolution brewing in France and the tendencies of fashionable Catholicism. But enough, enough! Why talk of this? Why is it that even in moments of unthinking careless gaiety a different and strange mood suddenly comes upon one? The smile has scarcely faded from the lips when, even among the same people, one is suddenly another man and already the face shines with a different light.

‘Here is the chaise! Here is the chaise!’ cried Tchitchikov, seeing his chaise drive up at last. ‘Why have you been dawdling about so long, stupid? I suppose the drink you had yesterday has not quite gone off?’

Selifan made no answer to this.

‘Good-bye, ma’am! But, I say, where is your little girl?’

‘Hey, Pelageya!’ said the old lady to a girl of eleven who stood near the steps in a frock of home-dyed linen, with bare legs so coated with fresh mud that at a little distance they might have been taken for boots. ‘Show the gentleman the way.’

Selifan gave a hand to the girl who, putting her foot on to the carriage step and covering it with mud, clambered up and sat down on the box beside him. Tchitchikov put his foot on the step after her and tilting the chaise down on the right side, for he was no light weight, settled himself in at last, saying, 'We are all right now! Good-bye, ma'am!'

The horses set off.

Selifan was sullen all the way and at the same time very attentive to his driving, as he always was whenever he had been drunk or to blame in any way. The horses had been marvellously groomed. The collar on one of them, which had almost always hitherto been put on with a rent in it, so that the stuffing peeped out under the leather, had been skilfully repaired. All the way he was silent; he merely lashed the horses and did not address any words of admonishment to them, though the dappled-grey was doubtless longing for a sermon, for the reins were always slack and the whip was merely passed over their backs as a matter of form when the garrulous driver was holding forth. On this occasion, however, no sound came from his sullen lips but monotonous and unpleasant exclamations: 'Now then! now! raven! crawling along!' Even the bay and the Assessor were dissatisfied at not once hearing the usual terms of endearment. The dappled-grey felt the lashes on his broad, plump sides extremely disagreeable. 'I say, how he is going it,' he thought

to himself, twitching his ears a little. 'He knows right enough where to hit! He doesn't simply switch one on the back, but just picks out the spot that is tenderest; he flicks one on the ear or lashes one under the belly.'

'To the right?' was the curt question Selifan addressed to the girl sitting beside him, as he pointed with his whip towards the rain-darkened road between the fresh bright green fields.

'No, no, I'll show you,' answered the girl.

'Which way?' asked Selifan, when they were getting nearer.

'That way,' answered the girl, pointing with her hand.

'Well, you are a one,' said Selifan. 'Why, that is to the right: she doesn't know her right hand from her left!'

Though it was a very fine day, the ground was so thick with mud that the chaise wheels, flinging it up, were soon thickly coated, and that made the carriage considerably heavier. Moreover, the soil was of exceptionally sticky clay. Owing to these difficulties it was midday before they got on to the high-road. They would have hardly done that without the girl, for the by-roads ran zig-zagging to and fro like crabs when they are shaken out of a sack, and Selifan might well have gone astray through no fault of his own. Soon the girl pointed to a dingy-looking building in the distance, saying: 'Yonder is the high-road!'

'And the house?' asked Selifan.

'It's the tavern,' said the girl.

‘Well, now we can get along by ourselves,’ said Selifan, ‘you can run home.’

He stopped and helped her to get down, muttering through his teeth: ‘Oh, you grubby legs!’

Tchitchikov gave her a copper and she sauntered home, highly delighted at having had a ride on the box.

CHAPTER IV

As they approached the tavern, Tchitchikov told Selifan to stop for two reasons, that the horses might rest and also that he might himself have a little refreshment. The author must admit that he greatly envies the appetite and digestion of such people. He has no great opinion of all the grand gentlemen living in Petersburg and Moscow who spend their time in deliberating what to eat to-morrow and what to have for dinner the day after, and who invariably put pills into their mouths before beginning on the dinner, then swallow oysters, lobsters, and other strange things and afterwards go for a cure to Carlsbad or the Caucasus. No, those gentlemen have never excited his envy. But the gentlemen of the middling sort who ask for ham at one station and sucking-pig at the next, a slice of sturgeon or some fried sausage and onion at the third, and then, as though nothing had happened, sit down to table at any time you please, and with a hissing, gurgling sound gulp down a sturgeon-soup full of eel-pouts and soft roes to the accompaniment of a turnover or a fish patty, so that it makes other people hungry to look at them. Yes, these gentlemen certainly do enjoy a blessing that may well be envied! More than one grand gentleman would any minute sacri-

fice half his peasants and half his estates, mortgaged and unmortgaged, with all the improvements in foreign and Russian style, only to possess a digestion such as that of a middle-class gentleman. But the worst of it is that no money, nor even estates with or without improvements, can procure a digestion like that of a middle-class gentleman.

The wooden tavern, blackened by age, received Tchitchikov under its narrow hospitable porch which stood on carved wooden posts like old-fashioned church candlesticks. The tavern was something in the style of a Russian peasant's hut but on a rather larger scale. The cornices of new wood carved in patterns round the windows and under the roof stood out vividly against the dark walls; pots of flowers were painted on the shutters.

Going up the narrow wooden steps into the wide outer room, Tchitchikov met a door, that opened with a creak, and a fat woman in a bright chintz gown, who said: 'Please come this way!' In the inner room he found the usual old friends that are always to be seen in all the little wooden taverns of which not a few are built by the roadside; that is, a begrimed samovar, smoothly planed deal walls, a three-cornered cupboard containing cups and teapots in the corner, gilt china eggs hanging on red and blue ribbons in front of the ikons, a cat who had recently had kittens, a looking-glass that reflected four eyes instead of two, and transformed the human countenance into a sort of bun, bunches of scented herbs and pinks stuck

before the ikons, so dry that any one who tried to sniff them would be sure to sneeze.

‘Have you any sucking-pig?’ was the question Tchitchikov addressed to the woman.

‘Yes, we have.’

‘With horse-radish and sour cream?’

‘Yes, with horse-radish and sour cream.’

‘Let me have some!’

The old woman went off to rummage and brought a plate and a table napkin, starched till it was as stiff as a dried crust and would not lie flat, then a knife with a bone handle yellow with age, and a blade as thin as a penknife, a two-pronged fork and a salt-cellar, which would not stand straight on the table.

Our hero, as his habit was, instantly entered into conversation with her, and inquired whether she kept the tavern herself or whether there was a master, and what income the tavern yielded and whether their sons were living at home with them and whether the eldest son was a married man or a bachelor and whether he had married a wife with a big dowry or not, and whether the bride’s father was satisfied or had been vexed at not getting presents enough at the wedding; in fact, he went into everything. I need hardly say that he was anxious to find out what landowners there were in the neighbourhood and learned that there were landowners of all sorts: Blohin, Potchitaev, Mylnoy, Tcheprakov, the Colonel, and Sobakevitch.

‘Ah! you know Sobakevitch!’ he said, and at

once heard that the old woman knew not only Sobakevitch, but also Manilov; and that Manilov was more refined than Sobakevitch: he would order a fowl to be boiled at once, and would ask for veal too; if they had sheep's liver he would ask for that too, and would take no more than a taste of everything, while Sobakevitch would only ask for one dish, but then he would eat up every morsel and would even expect a second helping for the same price.

While he was talking in this way and eating the sucking-pig, of which only the last slice by now remained, he heard the rumbling wheels of an approaching carriage. Looking out of window he saw a light chaise drawn by three good horses pull up at the tavern. Two men got out of the chaise: one tall and fair-haired, the other somewhat shorter and dark. The fair-haired man was wearing a dark-blue braided jacket, the black-haired man simply a striped jerkin. Another wretched-looking carriage was crawling up in the distance, empty and drawn by four shaggy horses with torn collars and harness made of cord. The fair man at once went upstairs while the dark fellow stayed behind, fumbling for something in the chaise while he talked to his servant and at the same time waved to the carriage that was following. His voice struck Tchitchikov as somehow familiar. While he was looking more closely at him, the fair man had felt his way to the door and opened it. He was a tall man, with a thin or what is called worn face and a red moustache.

From his tanned face it might be gathered that he was familiar with tobacco smoke anyway, if not with that of gunpowder. He gave Tchitchikov a polite bow, to which the latter responded with equal politeness. Within a few minutes they would have probably been talking freely and making acquaintance, for the ice had already been broken and they were both almost at the same moment expressing their satisfaction that the dust on the road had been completely laid by the rain of the previous day, and that now it was cool and pleasant for driving, when his dark-haired companion walked in, flinging his cap down on the table, and jauntily ruffling up his thick black hair with his fingers. He was a fine, very well made young fellow of medium height, with full ruddy cheeks, snow-white teeth, and pitch-black whiskers. He was as fresh as milk and roses, his face looked simply bursting with health.

‘Bah, bah, bah!’ he exclaimed, flinging wide his hands at the sight of Tchitchikov. ‘How did you come here?’

Tchitchikov recognised Nozdryov, the young man with whom he had dined at the public prosecutor’s and who had within a few minutes become very intimate in his manner and taken up a familiar tone, though our hero had given him no encouragement.

‘Where are you going to?’ said Nozdryov, and without waiting for an answer he went on: ‘I have just come from the fair, old man. Congratulate me, I’ve been cleaned out! Would you believe it, I have never been so thoroughly

cleaned out in my life. Why, I have driven here with hired horses! Do just take a look at them!’

Hereupon he bent Tchitchikov’s head down so that the latter almost knocked it against the window frame.

‘Do you see what wretched hacks they are? They could scarcely crawl here, the damned brutes; I had to get into his chaise.’

Saying this Nozdryov pointed to his companion.

‘You are acquainted, are you? My brother-in-law, Mizhuev! We have been talking about you all the morning. “You see now,” I said, “if we don’t meet Tchitchikov.” Well, old man, if only you knew how I have been fleeced! Would you believe it, I have not only dropped my four fast trotters, I have got rid of every mortal thing. Why, I have no watch or chain left.’

Tchitchikov glanced at him, and saw that he was in fact wearing neither watch nor chain. He even fancied that one of his whiskers was shorter and not so thick as the other.

‘But if I had only twenty roubles in my pocket,’ Nozdryov went on, ‘no more than twenty roubles, I would win it all back, and I’d not only win it all back, on my honour, I’d put thirty thousand in my pocket-book at once.’

‘You said the same thing then, though,’ retorted the fair man, ‘but when I gave you fifty roubles, you lost them on the spot.’

‘I should not have lost them, upon my soul, I shouldn’t! If I hadn’t done a silly thing, I shouldn’t! If I hadn’t laid two to one on that

damned seven after the stakes had been doubled, I might have broken the whole bank.'

'You didn't break it, though,' observed the fair man.

'I didn't break it because I laid two to one on the seven at the wrong minute. But do you suppose your major is a good player?'

'Whether he is good or bad, he beat you.'

'As though that mattered,' said Nozdryov; 'I shall beat him all the same. Just let him try playing doubles, then I shall see; I shall see then how much of a player he is. But what a roaring time we had the first days, friend Tchitchikov. The fair really was a first-rate one. The very dealers said there had never been such a crowd. Everything I had brought from the village was sold at tip-top prices. Ah, my boy, didn't we have a time! Even now when one thinks of it . . . dash it all! What a pity you weren't there! Only fancy, there was a regiment of dragoons stationed only two miles from the town. Would you believe it, all the officers, forty of them, were in the town, every man-jack of them. . . . When we began to drink, my boy . . . the staff-captain Potsyeluev . . . such a jolly fellow . . . such fine moustaches, my boy! He calls Bordeaux simply "bordashka." "Bring us some bordashka, waiter!" he would say. Lieutenant Kuvshinnikov . . . ah, my boy, what a charming man! One might say he is a regular dog! He and I were together all the time. What wine Ponomarev brought out for us! You must know he is a regular cheat; you shouldn't

buy anything in his shop; he puts all sorts of rubbish into his wine, sandalwood, burnt cork, and even colours it with elderberries, the rogue: but if he brings out from some remote place they call the special room, some choice little bottle, well then, old boy, you will find yourself in the empyrean. We had champagne . . . what was the governor's compared with it?—no better than cider. Just fancy, not Cliquot but a special Cliquot-Matradura which means double Cliquot. And he got us a bottle of French wine too, called Bon-bon, with a fragrance!—of roses and anything you like! Didn't we have a roaring time! A prince who came after us sent to the shop for champagne, there wasn't a bottle to be had in the town: the officers had drunk it all. Would you believe it, I drank seventeen bottles of champagne myself at dinner!'

'Come, you can't drink seventeen bottles,' observed the fair man.

'As a man of honour I tell you I did,' answered Nozdryov.

'You can tell yourself what you like, but I tell you that you can't drink ten.'

'Well, would you like to bet I can't?'

'Bet for what?'

'Well, bet me the gun that you bought in the town.'

'I won't.'

'Oh, do bet it, try!'

'I don't want to try.'

'Yes, you would lose your gun if you did, as you

lost your cap. Oh, friend Tchitchikov, how sorry I was you weren't there! I know that you would never have parted from Lieutenant Kuvshinnikov. How he and you would have got on together! He is very different from the public prosecutor and all the old niggards in our town who tremble over every farthing. He's ready to play any game you like. Oh, Tchitchikov, you might just as well have come! You really were a pig not to, you cattle-breeder! Kiss me, my dear soul, I like you awfully! Just fancy, Mizhnev, here fate has brought us together! Why, what was he to me or I to him? He has come here God knows where from and I, too, am living here. . . . And what lots of carriages there were, old boy, and it was all *en gros*. I tried my luck and won two pots of pomatum, a china cup and a guitar; and then I staked once more and lost more than six roubles, damn it all. And what a flirt that Kuvshinnikov is if you only knew! We went with him to almost all the balls. There was one girl dressed up to the nines, all frills and flounces, and the deuce knows what. I thought to myself: "Dash it all!" But Kuvshinnikov, he is a devil of a fellow, sat down beside her and let off such compliments in French. . . . Would you believe it, he wouldn't let the peasant women alone either. That's what he calls "gathering roses while ye may." There were wonderful fish and dried sturgeon for sale; I did bring one away with me, it's a good thing I thought to buy it while I had the money left. Where are you off to now?'

‘I am going to see somebody,’ said Tchitchikov.

‘Come, what does somebody matter? Chuck him, come home with me!’

‘I can’t, I can’t, I have business.’

‘There now, it’s business! What next. Oh you, Opodeldoc Ivanitch!’

‘I really have business and very urgent business too.’

‘I bet you are lying. Come tell me, who is it you are going to see?’

‘Why, Sobakevitch.’

At this point Nozdryov burst into a loud resounding guffaw, laughing as only a man in the best of health laughs when every one of his teeth white as sugar are displayed and his cheeks tremble and quiver, and his fellow-lodger three rooms away leaps up from his sleep and, with his eyes starting out of his head, cries: ‘Well, he is going it!’

‘What is there funny about it?’ asked Tchitchikov, somewhat disconcerted by this laughter.

But Nozdryov went on roaring with laughter as he ejaculated: ‘Oh spare me, I shall split with laughing!’

‘There is nothing funny in it; I promised him to go,’ said Tchitchikov.

‘But you know you won’t enjoy yourself staying with him: he’s a regular skinflint! I know your character: you are cruelly mistaken if you think you will find a game of cards and a good bottle of Bon-bon there. I say, old boy: hang Sobakevitch! Come home with me! What a sturgeon I’ll set before you! Ponomarev kept bowing away, the

beast, and saying: "I got it expressly for you, you might look all through the fair," he said, "and you wouldn't find one like it." He is an awful rogue, though. I told him so to his face. "Our government contractor and you are the two greatest cheats going!" I said. He laughed and stroked his beard, the brute. Kuvshinnikov and I had lunch every day in his shop. Oh, my boy, there's something I forgot to tell you about; I know you'll never leave off about it, but for ten thousand roubles I won't let you have it, so I give you fair warning. Hey, Porfiry!' going to the window, he shouted to his servant, who in one hand was holding a knife and in the other a crust of bread and a slice of sturgeon, which he had succeeded in cutting for himself while getting something out of the chaise. 'Hey, Porfiry, bring the pup here! Such a pup,' he went on, addressing Tchitchikov. 'Stolen it must be, the owner would never have parted with it of his own accord. I offered my chestnut mare for it, the one you remember Hvostyrev swopped me.'

Tchitchikov however had never in his life seen the chestnut mare or Hvostyrev.

'Won't you have something to eat, sir?' said the old woman, going up to him at that moment.

'No, nothing. Ah, my boy, what a roaring time we had! Give me a glass of vodka, though. What sort have you got?'

'Flavoured with aniseed,' answered the old woman.

'Give me a glass, too,' said the fair man.

‘ At the theatre there was an actress who sang like a canary, the hussy! Kuvshinnikov who was sitting by me, “ I say, my boy,” says he, “ there ’s a rose that wants gathering.” There must have been quite fifty booths, I believe. Fenardi turned somersaults for four hours.’ At this point he took the glass out of the hands of the old woman, who made him a low bow for doing so.

‘ Ah, give him here,’ he shouted, seeing Porfiry come in with the puppy. Porfiry was dressed like his master in a sort of jerkin, wadded and somewhat greasy, however.

‘ Bring him here, put him down on the floor ! ’

Porfiry set down the puppy which, stretching out all its four legs, sniffed at the floor.

‘ Here ’s the pup ! ’ said Nozdryov, picking it up by its back and holding it up in the air. The puppy gave a rather plaintive howl.

‘ But you haven’t done what I told you,’ said Nozdryov, addressing Porfiry, and carefully scrutinising the puppy’s belly ; ‘ and didn’t you think to comb him ? ’

‘ Yes, I did comb him.’

‘ Well, why has he got fleas then ? ’

‘ I can’t tell. They may have got on to him from the chaise.’

‘ You are lying, you are lying, you never thought of combing him ; and I expect, you fool, you let him catch yours too. Just look here, Tchitchikov, look what ears ; here, feel them.’

‘ But why ? I can see without that : it’s a good breed,’ answered Tchitchikov.

‘No, take him, feel his ears.’

To gratify him Tchitchikov felt the dog’s ears, saying as he did so: ‘Yes, he will make a good dog.’

‘And feel how cold his nose is. Take hold of it.’

Not wishing to offend him Tchitchikov touched the dog’s nose too, and said: ‘He’ll have a good scent.’

‘He’s a real bull-dog,’ Nozdryov went on. ‘I must own I’ve been keen to get a bull-dog for ever so long. Here, Porfiry, take him away.’

Porfiry, putting his arm round the puppy, carried him off to the chaise.

‘I say, Tchitchikov, you absolutely must come back with me now; it’s only three miles, we shall whisk there like the wind, and then, if you like, you can go on to Sobakevitch.’

‘Well,’ thought Tchitchikov to himself, ‘why shouldn’t I really go to Nozdryov’s. Isn’t he as good as any one else and he has just lost money too. He is ready for anything, as one can see. So one might get him to give one something for nothing. Very well, let us go,’ he said, ‘but on condition you don’t keep me; my time’s precious.’

‘Well, you darling, that’s right! That’s capital! Stay! I must give you a kiss for that.’

Hereupon Nozdryov and Tchitchikov kissed each other.

‘First-rate; we will set off, the three of us!’

‘No, let me off, please,’ said the fair man, ‘I must get home.’

‘Nonsense, nonsense, old man: I won’t let you go.’

‘My wife will be cross, really; now you can get into the gentleman’s chaise.’

‘No, no, no! Don’t you think it.’

The fair man was one of those people in whose character a certain obstinacy is at first sight apparent. Before you have time to open your lips they are ready to begin arguing, and it seems as though they will never agree to what is openly opposed to their way of thinking, that they will never call what is foolish sensible, and above all will never dance to another man’s piping. But it always ends in their displaying a weakness of will, in their agreeing to what they have denied, calling what is foolish sensible and dancing in fine style to another man’s piping—in fact they begin well and end badly.

‘Nonsense,’ said Nozdryov in reply to some protest on the part of the fair man; then he put the latter’s cap on his head and—the fair man followed them.

‘For the drop of vodka, sir, you have not paid,’ said the old woman.

‘Oh, all right, all right, my good woman. I say, dear boy! pay it for me, please, I haven’t a farthing in my pocket.’

‘How much do you want?’ asked his brother-in-law.

‘Why, twenty kopecks, sir,’ said the old woman.

‘Nonsense, nonsense, give her half. It’s quite enough for her.’

‘That’s very little, sir,’ said the old woman. She took the money with gratitude, however, and ran with ~~stac~~acrity to open the door. She was not a loser by the transaction, for she had asked four times the cost of the vodka.

The travellers took their seats. Tchitchikov’s chaise drove by the side of the one in which Nozdryov and his brother-in-law were seated, and so they could all talk freely together on the way. Nozdryov’s wretched little carriage drawn by the lean hired horses followed behind, continually halting. Porfiry was in it with the puppy.

As the conversation which the travellers kept up was of no great interest to the reader, we shall do better if we say something about Nozdryov himself, since he is perhaps destined to play not the least important part in our poem.

The personality of Nozdryov is certainly to some extent familiar to the reader already. Every one must have met more than a few like him. They are called dashing fellows and are known even in childhood and at school as good companions, though they are apt to get a good many hard knocks for all that. There is always something open, direct, and reckless in their faces. They are quick to make friends, and you can hardly look round before they have begun addressing you as though they had known you all their lives. One would think they were friends for life; but it almost always happens that their new friend quarrels with them the very evening when they are celebrating their friendship. They are always great

talkers, rakes, and dare-devils, and are always to the fore in everything. At thirty-five, Nozdryov was exactly the same as he had been at eighteen and twenty : given up to the pursuit of pleasure. His marriage did not change him in the least, especially as his wife departed to a better world soon after it, leaving him with two small children who were not at all what he wanted. The children, however, were looked after by an engaging little nurse. He could never stay at home for more than a day at a time. He never failed to get wind of any fairs, assemblies, or balls for miles around ; in a twinkling of an eye he was there, squabbling and getting up a row at the green table, for like all men of his kind he had a great passion for cards.

As we have seen in the first chapter, his play was not quite above suspicion, he was up to all sorts of tricks and dodges, and so the game often ended in sport of a different kind : either he got a good drubbing or had his fine thick whiskers pulled out, so that he often returned home with only one whisker and that somewhat attenuated. But his full healthy cheeks were so happily constituted and capable of such luxuriant growth, that his whiskers soon sprouted and were finer than ever. And what is strangest of all and only possible in Russia, within a short time he would meet again the very friends who had given him such a dressing, and meet them as though nothing had happened : he, as the saying is, did not turn a hair and they did not turn a hair.

Nozdryov was in a certain sense an *historical*

character. No gathering at which he was present went off without some 'history.' Some sort of scandal invariably occurred: either he was conducted out of the ballroom by the police, or his friends were forced to eject him themselves. If that did not occur, something would be sure to happen that never would happen to any one else: either he would get so drunk at the refreshment bar that he did nothing but laugh, or he would tell such fantastic lies that at last he felt ashamed of himself. And he would lie without any provocation: he would suddenly assert that he had a horse whose coat was a light blue or pink colour, and nonsense of that sort, so that at last his listeners would walk away from him, saying: 'Well, my lad, it seems you are drawing the long-bow.' There are people who have a passion for playing nasty tricks on their neighbours, sometimes without the slightest provocation. Even a man of good position and gentlemanly appearance, with a decoration on his breast will, for instance, shake hands, and converse with you on intellectual subjects that call for deep reflection, and in another minute before your very eyes he is playing you a nasty trick like the humblest little copying clerk and not at all like a man with a decoration on his breast conversing on subjects that call for deep reflection, so that you simply stand amazed and can do nothing but shrug your shoulders. Nozdryov had this strange passion too. The more intimate any one was with him, the readier he was to do him a bad turn; he would spread the most in-

credible tales which would have been hard to beat for silliness, upset a wedding or a business transaction, and all the while would be far from regarding himself as your enemy; on the contrary, if chance threw you with him again, he would behave in the most friendly way again and would even say: 'You are a wretch, you never come to see me.' In a certain sense Nozdryov was a many-sided man, that is, a man who could turn his hand to anything. In the same breath he would offer to go with you to the furthest ends of the earth, to undertake any enterprise you might choose, to swop anything in the world for anything you like. Guns, dogs, horses, anything would do for a swop, not with the slightest idea of gain; it all sprang from an irresistible impetuosity and recklessness of character. If he had the luck to hit upon a simpleton at a fair and rook him, he bought masses of things because they caught his eye in the shops: horse collars, fumigating candles, kerchiefs for the nurse, a stallion, raisins, a silver washing-basin, holland linen, fine wheaten flour, tobacco, pistols, herrings, pictures, a lathe, pots, boots, china—as long as his money lasted. However, it rarely happened that all this wealth was carried home; almost the same day it would pass into the hands of some luckier gambler, sometimes even with the addition of a peculiar pipe with a tobacco pouch and a mouth-piece, and another time with all his four horses, carriage, and coachman, so that their former owner had to set to work in a short jacket or a jerkin to look out for a friend to give him a lift in his

carriage. Such was Nozdryov! Perhaps he will be called a hackneyed character, and it will be said that there are no Nozdryovs now. Alas! those who say so are wrong. It will be many long years before the Nozdryovs are extinct. They are everywhere among us, and the only difference perhaps is that they are wearing a different cut of coat; but people are carelessly unobservant and a man in a different coat seems to them a different man.

Meanwhile the three carriages rolled up to the steps of Nozdryov's house. There was no sort of preparation for their reception within. There were wooden trestles in the middle of the dining-room, and two peasants standing on them were whitewashing the walls, carolling some endless song; the floor was all splashed with whitewash. Nozdryov ordered the peasants and the trestles out of the room on the spot and ran out into the next room to give instructions. The guests heard him giving the cook directions about dinner; Tchitchikov, who was already beginning to be aware of an appetite, saw clearly that they would not sit down to table within five hours. On his return Nozdryov conducted his visitors to see everything he had in the village, and in the course of a little more than two hours showed them absolutely everything, so that there was nothing else to be shown. First of all, they went to inspect the stable where they saw two more mares, one a dappled grey, the other a chestnut, then a bay stallion, not very handsome to look at, though

Nozdryov swore that he had paid ten thousand for it.

‘You didn’t give ten thousand for him,’ said his brother-in-law. ‘He’s not worth one.’

‘Upon my soul, I did give ten thousand for him,’ said Nozdryov.

‘You can swear as much as you like,’ answered his brother-in-law.

‘Well, will you take a bet on it?’ said Nozdryov.

His brother-in-law did not care to bet on it.

Then Nozdryov showed them the empty stalls in which there had once been other good horses. In the same stables they saw a goat, which in accordance with the old superstition they considered it essential to keep with the horses, and which seemed to be on the best of terms with them and walked about under their bellies as though it were at home there. Then Nozdryov led them to view a wolf-cub which was kept tied up. ‘Here’s the wolf-cub!’ he said. ‘I feed him on raw meat on purpose. I want him to be quite fierce.’ They went to look at the pond, in which according to Nozdryov there were fish of such size that two men could with difficulty pull one out. His brother-in-law did not fail to express his doubts of the fact.

‘I am going to show you, Tchitchikov, a couple of first-rate dogs: the strength of their black flesh is simply amazing, their hair is like needles’; and he led them into a very picturesquely built little house, surrounded by a large yard, fenced in on all sides. When they went into the yard they saw dogs of all kinds, borzoys of several breeds of all

shades and colours, dark brown, black and tan, black and white, brown and white, red and white, with black ears and with grey ears. . . . They had all sorts of names, often in the imperative mood : Shoot-away, Growl-away, Dash-away, Fire, Cross-eye, Pointer, Bakewell, Scorcher, Swallow, Hasty, Treasure, Caretaker. With them Nozdryov was just like a father among his children : they all flew to meet and welcome the visitors with their tails in the air in accordance with the rules of canine etiquette. A dozen of them put their paws on Nozdryov's shoulders, Growl-away displayed great affection for Tchitchikov and, getting on his hind-legs, licked him right on the lips, so that our friend turned aside and spat at once. They inspected the dogs the strength of whose 'black flesh' was so amazing — they were fine dogs. Then they went to look at a Crimean bitch who was blind and in Nozdryov's words would soon be dead, but had two years ago been a very good bitch. They looked at the bitch, she certainly was blind. Then they went to look at a water-mill ; it had lost the iron ring on which the upper stone rests as it turns rapidly on the axle—whisks round, to use the delightful expression of the Russian peasant. 'And the smithy is close by,' said Nozdryov ; and going on a little further they saw the smithy, and that too they inspected.

'Look, in that field,' said Nozdryov, pointing to it, 'there are such masses of hares that you can't see the ground ; I caught one by the hind-legs with my own hands.'

‘Come, you can’t catch a hare with your hands,’ observed his brother-in-law.

‘But I say I did catch one, I caught one on purpose!’ answered Nozdryov. ‘Now,’ he said, addressing Tchitchikov, ‘I am going to take you to see the boundaries of my property.’

Nozdryov led his visitors across fields which in many places were covered with hillocks. The guests had to make their way between rough fallow land and ploughed fields. Tchitchikov began to feel tired. In many places the water squelched up under their feet, it was such low-lying ground. At first they were careful and picked their way, but afterwards, seeing that it was of no use, walked straight on without looking out for the mud. After walking a considerable distance they did indeed see the boundary, which consisted of a wooden post and a narrow ditch.

‘This is the boundary,’ said Nozdryov, ‘all that you see on this side is mine and even on the other side of it, all that forest which you see in the blue distance over there and all that beyond the forest is mine too.’

‘But when did that forest become your property?’ asked the brother-in-law. ‘Surely you haven’t bought it lately? It used not to be yours, you know.’

‘Yes, I bought it lately,’ answered Nozdryov.

‘When did you manage to buy it so quickly?’

‘Oh, I bought it the day before yesterday and paid a lot for it too, dash it all!’

‘Why, but you were at the fair then.’

‘Ough, you duffer! Can’t one be at a fair and yet buy land? I was at the fair and while I was away my steward bought it for me.’

‘But how could the steward?’ said his brother-in-law; but at that moment he looked dubious and shook his head.

The visitors returned to the house by the same disgusting road. Nozdryov led them to his study, in which however there was nothing commonly seen in studies, such as books or papers; on the walls there hung swords and two guns, one that had cost three hundred and the other eight hundred roubles. The brother-in-law after examining them merely shook his head. Then they were shown some Turkish daggers, on one of which there had been engraved by mistake: Made by Savely Sibiryakov. Then the friends were shown a barrel-organ. Nozdryov immediately turned the handle. The barrel-organ played not unpleasantly, but something seemed to go wrong with it in the middle, for the mazurka ended up with the song, ‘Marlbrook s’en va-t-en guerre,’ and Marlbrook wound up unexpectedly with an old familiar waltz. Nozdryov had left off turning, but there was one pipe in the organ that was very irrepressible and, unwilling to be silenced, went on for a long time fluting by itself.

Then they were shown pipes made of wood, of clay, or of meerschaum, smoked and unsmoked, wrapped up in chamois leather and not wrapped up, a chibouk with an amber mouthpiece lately won at cards, a tobacco pouch embroidered by a

countess who had fallen head over ears in love with him somewhere at a posting station, and whose hands were in his words, *subtilement superflues*, words that apparently to him suggested the acme of perfection. After a preliminary snack of salt sturgeon they sat down to dinner about five o'clock. Dinner evidently was not the chief interest in Nozdryov's life; the dishes did not make a very fine show, some were burnt, others quite uncooked. It was evident the cook was guided by inspiration and put in the first ingredient he laid his hand on: if the pepper happened to stand by him he put in pepper, if cabbage turned up, in it went, he flung in milk, ham, peas—in short he pitched in everything pell-mell so long as it was hot, thinking it would be sure to have some sort of taste. On the other hand Nozdryov was strong on wines: even before the soup was handed round he had already poured out for each of his guests a big glass of port and another of Haut Sauterne, for in provincial towns there is no such thing as simple Sauterne. Then Nozdryov sent for a bottle of Madeira, 'no field-marshal ever drank better,' he said. The Madeira certainly did burn their mouths, for the wine merchants know the tastes of country gentlemen who are fond of good Madeira, and doctor it mercilessly with rum and sometimes put plain vodka in it, confidently relying on the fortitude of the Russian stomach. Then Nozdryov ordered a special bottle to be fetched of a wine which, according to him, was a mixture of Burgundy and champagne. He poured

it very freely into the glasses of both—to right and to left, to his brother-in-law and Tchitchikov. Tchitchikov noticed, however, out of the corner of his eye that his host took very little for himself. This put him on his guard, and as soon as Nozdryov's attention was distracted by talking or pouring out wine for his brother-in-law he upset his wine-glass into his plate. After a brief interval a liqueur made from rowan berries was put on the table and described by Nozdryov as tasting exactly like cream, though to their surprise it tasted strongly of corn-brandy. Then they drank some sort of balsam which had a name difficult to remember, and, indeed, the master of the house called it by a different name later on. The dinner had long ago been finished and all the wines tasted, but the guests still sat at the table. Tchitchikov was not at all anxious to broach the great subject to Nozdryov before the brother-in-law: the latter was in any case a third person and the subject called for privacy and friendly talk. At the same time the brother-in-law could hardly be a man to be afraid of, for he was apparently quite tipsy and was nodding in his chair. Perceiving himself that he was in a somewhat unstable condition, he began to talk of going home, but in a voice as languid and listless as though, to use the Russian expression, he were putting on a horse's collar with a pair of pincers.

‘No, no, I won't let you go,’ said Nozdryov.

‘No, don't worry me, my dear boy, I am going really,’ said the brother-in-law, ‘you treat me very badly.’

‘Nonsense, nonsense! We will have a game of bank in a minute.’

‘No, you play yourself, my boy, but I can’t: my wife will be dreadfully upset, I must tell her all about the fair. I must, my boy, I really must do that to please her. No, don’t keep me!’

‘Oh, your wife can go to . . .! Very important business that is! . . .’

‘No, my boy! She is such a good wife. She is really exemplary, so faithful and estimable. She does so much for me . . . you wouldn’t believe it, it brings tears into my eyes. No, don’t keep me, as I am an honest man I am going. On my word of honour, I assure you.’

‘Let him go; what’s the use of keeping him?’ said Tchitchikov to Nozdryov.

‘Ah, you are right there,’ said Nozdryov. ‘I simply hate such wet blankets’; and he added aloud: ‘Well, confound you, you can go and spoon with your wife, you muff.’

‘No, my boy, don’t call me names,’ answered his brother-in-law, ‘I am indebted to her, to my wife. She is so kind and good really, she is so sweet to me, she touches me to tears. She will ask me what I saw at the fair, I must tell her all about it . . . she is so sweet really.’

‘Well, be off then. . . . Tell her a lot of tosh! Here is your cap.’

‘No, you oughtn’t to talk like that about her, my boy; you are insulting me, I may say, when you do it, she is so sweet.’

‘Well, then, you make haste and take yourself off to her.’

‘Yes, my boy, I’m going, you must excuse me but I really can’t stay. I should love to, but I can’t.’ The brother-in-law went on a long while repeating his apologies without observing that he had for some time past been sitting in his chaise, had driven out beyond the gates and was facing nothing but the empty fields. It may be assumed that his wife heard but little of the incidents of the fair.

‘What a paltry fellow!’ said Nozdryov, standing before the window and looking at the carriage as it drove away. ‘Look how it rolls along. The trace-horse isn’t bad, I have long wanted to hook it. But there is no getting round him. He is a muff, a regular muff!’

Thereupon they went into another room. Porfiry brought candles, and Tchitchikov noticed in his host’s hands a pack of cards that seemed to have appeared from nowhere.

‘Well, my boy,’ said Nozdryov, pressing the side of the pack with his fingers and slightly bending it so that the paper round it split and flew off, ‘to pass the time I’ll put three hundred roubles in the bank.’

But Tchitchikov made as though he had not heard what was said, and observed as though suddenly recollecting: ‘Oh, while I think of it: I have something I want to ask you.’

‘What is it?’

‘Promise first that you will do it.’

‘But what is it?’

‘Come, promise first.’

‘Very well.’

‘On your honour?’

‘On my honour.’

‘This is what it is; I expect you have a great many dead serfs whose names have not been struck off the census list?’

‘Yes, I have, what of it?’

‘Transfer them to me, to my name.’

‘What do you want them for?’

‘Oh well, I want them.’

‘What for?’

‘Oh well, I want them . . . that’s my business, in fact I need them.’

‘Well, I suppose you have some scheme in your head. Own up now, what is it?’

‘Why, what scheme? There is nothing one could plan over such rubbish.’

‘But what do you want them for?’

‘Oh, how inquisitive he is! He wants to have his finger in every petty business and to poke his nose into it too!’

‘And why won’t you tell me?’

‘What good will it do you to know? Oh well, it is just a fancy of mine.’

‘Oh, all right, then: unless you tell me I won’t do it.’

‘Come, now, you see that’s not honourable on your part: you have given your word—and now you are going back on it.’

‘Well, that is just as you please, but I won’t do it till you tell me.’

‘What am I to say to him?’ thought Tchitchikov, and after a minute’s reflection he informed him he needed the dead souls to obtain a position in society, that at present he had not big estates, so that until he had, he would be glad of souls of any sort.

‘That’s a lie, that’s a lie!’ said Nozdryov, not allowing him to finish. ‘That’s a lie, old man!’

Tchitchikov himself realised that his fiction was not very plausible and that the pretext was rather a feeble one.

‘Oh, very well, then I will tell you straight out,’ he said, to set himself right, ‘only please don’t speak of it to any one. I am going to get married, but I must tell you that the father and mother of my betrothed are very ambitious people. It’s a regular nuisance. I regret the engagement: they are set on their daughter’s husband having at least three hundred souls, and as I am quite a hundred and fifty souls short of that . . .’

‘Come, that’s a lie, that’s a lie,’ cried Nozdryov again.

‘I assure you,’ said Tchitchikov, ‘I haven’t lied this little bit,’ and he pointed with his thumb to the top of his little finger.

‘I bet my head you are lying!’

‘This is really insulting. What do you take me for? Why are you so sure that I am lying?’

‘Why, I know you, you see; you are a great rascal—let me tell you in a friendly way! If I were your chief, I’d hang you on the nearest tree.’

Tchitchikov was offended by this observation.

Any expression in the least coarse or derogatory to his dignity was distasteful to him. He even disliked any sort of familiarity, except on the part of some personage of very high rank. And so on this occasion he was greatly offended.

‘Upon my soul, I would hang you,’ repeated Nozdryov. ‘I tell you so openly not to insult you, I only speak as a friend.’

‘There is a limit to everything,’ said Tchitchikov with an air of dignity. ‘If you want to display your wit in this way, you had better go to the barracks’; and then he added, ‘If you don’t care to give them to me, you might sell them.’

‘Sell them! But you see I know you, you are a rascal, I know you won’t give much for them.’

‘Ugh! you are a nice one, really! Think, what use are they to you, are they diamonds or what?’

‘Well, there you are! I knew you’d say that.’

‘Upon my word, my dear fellow, what Jewish propensities you have! You ought simply to give them to me.’

‘Well, listen then; to show you that I am not a shark, I won’t take anything for them. Buy my stallion and I will throw them in as a makeweight.’

‘Upon my soul, what do I want with a stallion?’ said Tchitchikov, genuinely astounded at such a proposition.

‘What do you want with one? But you know I gave ten thousand for him, and I will sell him to you for four.’

‘But what do I want with a stallion? I don’t keep a stud farm.’

‘ But listen, you don’t understand ; why, I will let you have him for three thousand and the other thousand you can pay me later.’

‘ But I don’t want the stallion, God bless him !’

‘ Well, buy the chestnut mare then.’

‘ I don’t want the mare either.’

‘ I will let you have the mare and the grey horse you saw in the stable for two thousand.’

‘ But I don’t want the horses.’

‘ You can sell them, they will give you three times as much for them at the first fair.’

‘ Well, you had better sell them yourself then, if you are sure you will get three times as much.’

‘ I know it would pay me better, but I want you to make something out of it.’

Tchitchikov thanked him for his kind intention, and refused point-blank both the grey horse and the chestnut mare.

‘ All right, then, buy some dogs. I’ll sell you a couple—that will simply make your hair stand on end ! Such whiskers ; their coat stands up like a brush ; and the barrel-shape of their ribs is beyond all conception, and their paws are so soft and supple—they don’t leave a mark on the ground.’

‘ But what do I want with dogs ? I am not a sportsman.’

‘ But I should like you to have dogs. Well, I say, if you don’t want dogs, buy my barrel-organ. It’s a wonderful organ. As I am an honest man, it cost me fifteen hundred roubles. I’ll let you have it for nine hundred.’

‘ But what do I want with a hurdy-gurdy ? I am not a German to go trudging about the roads with it, begging.’

‘ But this isn’t the sort of barrel-organ Germans go about with, you know. It’s an organ ; take a good look at it ; it’s all mahogany. I’ll show it to you again !’ At this point Nozdryov seizing Tchitchikov by the arm dragged him into the adjoining room and, though he held his ground firmly and declared that he knew what the barrel-organ was like, he had to hear how Marlborough went to war once more.

‘ If you don’t want to buy it, I tell you, I’ll give you the barrel-organ and all the dead souls I have got, and you give me your chaise and three hundred roubles thrown in.’

‘ What next ! What should I do for a carriage ?’

‘ I’d give you another chaise. Come along to the coach-house, I’ll show it you ! You have only to give it a coat of paint and it will be a capital chaise.’

‘ Ough, the devil is egging him on !’ Tchitchikov thought to himself, and he made up his mind that, come what might, he would refuse all chaises, barrel-organs, and any conceivable dog in spite of ribs, barrel-shaped beyond all conception, and paws so soft and supple.

‘ But, you see, you’ll have the chaise, the barrel-organ, and the dead souls all together.’

‘ I don’t want them !’ Tchitchikov said once more.

‘ Why don’t you want them ?’

‘ Because I simply don’t want them, and that ’s all about it.’

‘ Well, you are a fellow! I see there is no doing business with you as between good friends and comrades. . . . You really are . . . one can see at once that you are a double-faced man!’

‘ Why, do you take me for a fool or what? Judge for yourself: why should I take a thing absolutely of no use to me?’

‘ Oh, it is no use your talking. I understand you very well now. You are really such a cad. But I tell you what. If you like we ’ll have out the cards. I ’ll stake all my dead souls on a card, the barrel-organ too.’

‘ Well, staking it on a card means leaving it in uncertainty,’ said Tchitchikov, while he glanced askance at the cards that were in Nozdryov’s hands. Both the packs looked to him as though they had been tampered with and the very spots on the back looked suspicious.

‘ Why uncertainty?’ said Nozdryov. ‘ There is no uncertainty. If only the luck ’s on your side, you ’ll win a devilish lot. There it is! What luck!’ he said, beginning to lay out the cards to tempt him to play. ‘ What luck, what luck; take everything.’

‘ There ’s that damned nine that I lost everything on! I felt that it would sell me and, half shutting my eyes, I thought to myself: damnation take you, you may sell me, you brute!’

While Nozdryov was saying this, Porfiry brought in a bottle. But Tchitchikov absolutely refused either to drink or to play.

‘Why won’t you play?’ said Nozdryov.

‘Oh, because I don’t feel inclined. And, indeed, I must own that I am not particularly fond of cards at any time.’

‘Why aren’t you?’

Tchitchikov shrugged his shoulders and added:

‘Because I am not.’

‘You are a paltry fellow!’

‘What’s to be done? I am as God made me.’

‘You are a regular muff! I did think at first that you were more or less of a gentleman, but you don’t know how to behave at all. One can’t speak to you as one would to a friend. . . . There is no straightforwardness, no sincerity. You are a regular Sobakevitch, just such a scoundrel!’

‘What are you swearing at me for? Am I to blame for not playing? Sell me the souls alone, since you are so made that you worry about such trifles.’

‘Devil a one of them you shall have! I was meaning to let you have them for nothing, but now you shan’t have them! I wouldn’t give them for the riches of the world. You are a pickpocket, a nasty sweep. I won’t have anything to do with you from this time forth. Porfiry, go and tell the stable-boy not to give his horses any oats; don’t let them have anything but hay.’

Tchitchikov had not in the least expected this conclusion.

‘I wish I had never set eyes on you,’ said Nozdryov.

In spite of this little misunderstanding, how-

ever, the two gentlemen had supper together, though on this occasion there were no wines with fanciful names on the table. There was only one bottle containing Cypress wine, which was as sour as sour can be. After supper Nozdryov said to Tchitchikov, taking him into a room where a bed had been made up for him: 'Here's your bed. I don't want to say good-night to you.'

On Nozdryov's departure Tchitchikov was left in a most unpleasant frame of mind. He was inwardly annoyed with himself and swore at himself for coming here and wasting his time. But he blamed himself still more for having spoken to Nozdryov of business; he had behaved as recklessly as a child, as a fool, for his business was not of the sort that could safely be confided to Nozdryov . . . Nozdryov was a worthless fellow. Nozdryov might tell lies, exaggerate, spread abroad God knows what stories, and it might lead to all sorts of scandal . . . it was bad, it was bad. 'I am simply a fool,' he said to himself. He slept very badly. Some small and very lively insects bit him mercilessly, so much so that he scratched with all his fingers on the smarting place, saying as he did so: 'The devil take you and Nozdryov too.' He woke up early in the morning. His first action, after putting on his dressing-gown and boots, was to cross the yard to the stable to tell Selifan to put the horses in the chaise at once. As he crossed the yard on his way back, he met Nozdryov, who was also in his dressing-gown and had a pipe between his teeth.

Nozdryov gave him a friendly greeting and asked him what sort of a night he had had.

‘So-so,’ answered Tchitchikov very drily.

‘As for me, my boy,’ said Nozdryov, ‘such nasty things haunted me all night that it is loathsome to tell of them ; and it seemed as though there were a regiment of soldiers encamped in my mouth after yesterday. Only fancy, I dreamed that I was being thrashed, upon my soul ! And would you believe it ? You will never guess by whom : Captain Potsyeluev and Kuvshinnikov.’

‘Yes,’ thought Tchitchikov to himself, ‘it would be a good thing if you really were thrashed.’

‘Upon my soul ! And it hurt too ! I woke up, dash it all, something really was stinging me, I suppose it was those hags of fleas. Well, you go and get dressed ; I will come to you directly. I have only got to pitch into that rogue of a steward.’

Tchitchikov went back to his room, to wash and dress. When, after that, he went into the dining-room, the table was already laid for morning tea together with a bottle of rum. There were still traces about the room of the dinner and supper of the previous day and it seemed that no broom had been used. There were bread-crumbs on the floor and tobacco-ash even on the tablecloth. The master of the house himself who came in soon after had nothing on under his dressing-gown, and displayed a bare chest with something like a beard growing on it. Holding a chibouk in his hand and sipping from a cup, he would have been a very good subject for one of those painters who

detest sleek gentlemen with hair properly cut or curled like a barber's block.

'Well, so how is it to be?' said Nozdryov after a brief pause, 'won't you play for the souls?'

'I have told you, my boy, that I don't play. I will buy them if you like.'

'I don't want to sell them: that wouldn't be acting like a friend. I am not going to make filthy lucre from the devil knows what. Playing for it is a different matter. Let us have one game anyway.'

'I have told you already I won't.'

'And you won't change?'

'I won't.'

'Well, I tell you what, let us have a game at draughts; if you win they are all yours. I have got lots, you know, that ought to be struck off the census list. Hey, Porfiry, bring the draughtboard here!'

'No need to trouble: I am not going to play.'

'But this isn't cards; there is no question of chance or deception about it: it all depends on skill, you know. I must warn you beforehand that I can't play a bit, in fact you ought to give me something.'

'Well, suppose I do,' Tchitchikov thought to himself. 'I will play draughts with him. I don't play badly, and it will be difficult for him to be up to any tricks at draughts.'

'Very well, I will play at draughts.'

'The souls against a hundred roubles!'

'Why? Fifty would be quite enough.'

'No, fifty is not much of a stake. I had better

make it up with a puppy of some sort or a gold seal for your watch-chain.'

'Very well!' said Tchitchikov.

'What piece will you give me?' said Nozdryov.

'Whatever for? Certainly not.'

'You might at least give me the first two moves.'

'I won't, I am a poor player myself.'

'I know what sort of a poor player you are!' said Nozdryov, moving forward a draught.

'It's a long time since I touched a draughtsman,' said Tchitchikov, and he too advanced a piece.

'We know what sort of a poor player you are,' said Nozdryov, moving a draughtsman and at the same time pushing forward another with the cuff of his sleeve.

'I haven't touched one for ever so long! . . . Aie, aie! What's this, put it back,' said Tchitchikov.

'Which?'

'That draught there,' said Tchitchikov, and at the same moment saw almost under his nose another which had, it seemed, reached the point of becoming a king. Where it had come from, goodness only knows. 'No,' said Tchitchikov, getting up from the table. 'It is quite impossible to play with you. You can't play three moves at once!'

'Why three? It is a mistake. One was moved by accident; I'll put it back if you like.'

'And where did that other one come from?'

'What other one?'

'Why, that other one which is just going to be a king.'

‘Well, I say! don’t you remember?’

‘No, my friend, I have counted every move and I remember them all: you have only just put it there. Its proper place is here!’

‘What, which place?’ said Nozdryov, turning crimson. ‘I see you are a story-teller, old fellow.’

‘No, old fellow, it is you who tell stories, I fancy, but you don’t tell them successfully.’

‘For what do you take me?’ said Nozdryov. ‘Do you suppose I cheat?’

‘I don’t take you for anything, but I’ll never play with you again.’

‘No, you can’t refuse,’ said Nozdryov, getting hot, ‘the game has been begun.’

‘I have a right to refuse, for you don’t play as an honourable man should.’

‘No, that’s a lie, you mustn’t say that!’

‘No, you are lying yourself.’

‘I didn’t cheat and you can’t refuse to go on; you ought to finish the game!’

‘You won’t make me do that,’ said Tchitchikov coolly, and going up to the draughtboard he mixed the draughts together.

Nozdryov flushed crimson and advanced so close to Tchitchikov that the latter stepped back a couple of paces.

‘I’ll make you play. It does not matter that you have moved the pieces. I remember all the moves. We’ll put them back as they were.’

‘No, my dear fellow, that’s the end: I am not going to play with you again.’

‘So you won’t play?’

‘You can see yourself that it is impossible to play with you.’

‘No, say straight out, won’t you play?’ said Nozdryov, advancing closer.

‘No,’ said Tchitchikov, and at the same time he brought both his hands nearer to his face in case of need, for things were really getting rather too hot for him. This precaution was very well timed, for Nozdryov swung his arm . . . and it might easily have happened that one of our hero’s plump and prepossessing cheeks would have received an insult that nothing could have wiped out, but, fortunately warding off the blow, he seized Nozdryov by his two menacing arms and held him firmly.

‘Porfiry, Pavlushka!’ shouted Nozdryov in a fury, struggling to free himself.

Hearing this shout, Tchitchikov, not wishing the serfs to witness this seductive scene, and at the same time feeling it was useless to hold Nozdryov, let go of his arms. At that instant Porfiry entered followed by Pavlushka, a stalwart fellow with whom it would be distinctly unprofitable to come to blows.

‘So you won’t finish the game?’ said Nozdryov. ‘Give me a straightforward answer!’

‘It’s impossible to finish the game,’ said Tchitchikov and glanced out of the window. He saw his chaise standing quite ready and Selifan waiting apparently for a signal to drive up to the steps; but there was no possibility of getting out of the

room, two sturdy fools of serfs were standing in the doorway.

‘So you won’t finish the game,’ said Nozdryov with a face as hot as fire.

‘If you played as an honourable man should . . . but as it is, I can’t.’

‘So you can’t, you scoundrel! As soon as you see you are losing, you can’t! Beat him!’ he shouted frantically, turning to Porfiry and Pavlushka, while he caught hold of his cherrywood chibouk. Tchitchikov turned pale as a sheet. He tried to say something, but felt his lips move without uttering a sound.

‘Beat him!’ cried Nozdryov, dashing forward with the cherrywood chibouk, as hot and perspiring as though he were attacking an impregnable citadel. ‘Beat him!’ he shouted in the voice with which some desperate lieutenant shouts ‘Forward, lads!’ to his men, though his hot-headed valour has attained such notoriety that special instructions have been given him to curb it when advancing to the attack. But the lieutenant is stirred by martial ardour, everything whirls round in his head, he has visions of Suvorov and yearns for deeds of heroism. ‘Forward, lads!’ he shouts, regardless of the fact that he is ruining the plan laid down for the general attack, that innumerable guns are ranged in the embrasure of the impregnable fortress walls that vanish into the skies, that his helpless company will be blown into atoms, and that already the fatal bullet that will still his shouts and close his mouth for ever is

whistling through the air. But if Nozdryov did suggest a desperate and frantic lieutenant attacking a fortress, it must be admitted that the fortress that he was attacking was by no means an impregnable one. On the contrary, the object of his attack was so overwhelmed with terror that his heart sank into his heels. Already the chair with which he had thought to protect himself had been wrenched from his hands by the servants, already closing his eyes, more dead than alive, he was expecting to feel his host's Circassian chibouk, and God only knows what might not have happened to him in another moment; but the fates were pleased to spare the sides, the shoulders, and all the well-bred person of our hero. Suddenly and unexpectedly, as though from the clouds, came the tinkle of jangling bells, there was a distinct sound of the rattling wheels of a trap flying up to the steps, and the heavy snorts and laboured breathing of the over-heated horses resounded even in the room. Every one involuntarily glanced out of window: a man with a moustache, in a semi-military uniform, got out of the trap. After inquiries in the hall, he walked in before Tchitchikov could recover from his terror and while he was in the most pitiful position in which mortal could be placed.

'Allow me to inquire which of the present company is Mr. Nozdryov?' said the stranger, looking with some perplexity at Nozdryov who was standing with his chibouk in his hand, and at Tchitchikov who had scarcely begun to recover from his ignominious position.

‘Allow me to ask first, to whom I have the honour of speaking?’ said Nozdryov, going up to him.

‘I am the police-captain.’

‘And what do you want?’

‘I have come to inform you that you are placed under arrest until your case has been settled.’

‘What nonsense, what case?’ said Nozdryov.

‘You are implicated in the assault by thrashing on a gentleman by name Maximov whilst in a state of intoxication.’

‘That’s a lie! I have never set eyes on a gentleman called Maximov.’

‘Sir! Allow me to remind you that I am an officer. You may say that to your servant, but not to me.’

At this point Tchitchikov, without waiting for Nozdryov’s answer, made haste to pick up his hat, slipped behind the police-captain’s back, and out to the steps, got into his chaise and told Selifan to drive at his topmost speed.

CHAPTER V

OUR hero was thoroughly scared, however. Though the chaise flew along at full speed and Nozdryov's estate was soon left behind, out of sight, hidden behind fields and the rise and fall of the ground, he still looked behind him in terror as though expecting every minute to be pursued and overtaken. His breathing was laboured, and when he tried laying his hands on his heart he found that it was fluttering like a quail in a cage. 'Well, he has given me a treat! Just think what a fellow!' At this point there followed a number of angry and violent imprecations referring to Nozdryov, and indeed some bad language was uttered. How could it be otherwise? He was a Russian, and in a rage too! Besides, it was no joking matter. 'Say what you like,' he said, 'if the police-captain had not turned up in the nick of time I might well have looked my last on the light of day! I should have disappeared like a bubble on the water without leaving a trace, leaving no descendants and bequeathing to my future children neither fortune nor honour!' Our hero was always very much troubled about his descendants.

'What a nasty gentleman!' Selifan was thinking to himself. 'I have never seen such a gentleman before. He deserves to be spat upon! Better

give a man nothing to eat than not feed the horses properly, for a horse likes oats. They are a treat to him ; oats for him are what a feast is for us : it 's his pleasure.'

The horses too seemed to have an unflattering opinion of Nozdryov : not only the bay and Assessor but even the dappled-grey seemed dissatisfied. Though the worst of the oats always fell to his share and Selifan never poured them into his manger without first saying, ' Ah, you rascal,' still they were oats and not simply hay : he munched them with satisfaction and often thrust his long nose into his companions' mangers to try their portion, especially when Selifan was not in the stable ; but on this occasion there was nothing but hay—it was too bad ! Every one was displeased.

But they were all interrupted in their expressions of displeasure in a sudden and quite unexpected manner. All of them, not excluding the coachman, only came to themselves and realised what had happened when a carriage with six horses dashed into collision with them and they heard almost over their heads the screams of the ladies in the carriage, the threats and swearing of the coachman : ' You scoundrel, I shouted to you at the top of my voice : " Turn to the right, you crow." Are you drunk ? ' Selifan was very conscious of his negligence, but as a Russian is not fond of admitting before others that he is to blame, he drew himself up with dignity and promptly retorted : ' And you, why were you galloping in such style ? Have you left

your eyes in pawn at the pot-house or what?' Then he proceeded to back the horses so as to extricate them, but there was no managing it—everything was in a tangle. The dappled-grey sniffed with curiosity at the new friends whom he found on each side of him. Meanwhile the ladies in the carriage looked at it all with an expression of alarm on their faces. One ^{was} an old lady, the other a young girl of sixteen, ^{with} golden hair very charmingly and skilfully coiled about her little head. The pretty oval of her face was rounded like an egg and had the transparent whiteness of one when, fresh and new-laid, it is held up to the light by the housekeeper's dark-skinned hand and the rays of the flashing sun filter through it: her delicate ears were also transparent and flushed crimson by the light that penetrated through them. The terror on her parted lips, the tears in her eyes were all so charming that our hero stared at her for some minutes without noticing the uproar that was going on among the horses and the coachmen. 'Back, do, you Nizhni-Novgorod crow!' yelled the other coachman. Selifan tugged at the reins as hard as he could, the other coachman did the same, the horses shuffled back a little, and then stepping over the traces were entangled again. While this was going on, the dappled-grey was so attracted by his new companions that he felt no inclination to get out of the predicament in which an unforeseen destiny had placed him and, laying his nose upon the neck of his new friend, whispered

in his ear probably something dreadfully foolish, for the stranger constantly twitched his ears.

Peasants from the village, which was fortunately close at hand, ran up to give assistance. Since such a spectacle is a real godsend to a peasant, just as a newspaper or a club is to a German, numbers of them were soon swarming round the carriages and there was no one left in the village but the old women and little children. The traces were taken off, a few prods on the nose of the dappled-grey forced him to back; in short they were separated and led apart, but either owing to the annoyance felt by the horses at being parted from their friends or through foolishness, they would not move however much the coachman thrashed them but stood as though turned to stone. The sympathetic interest of the peasants reached an incredible pitch. Each one of them was continually volunteering advice: 'You go, Andryushka, you look after the trace-horse, the one on the right side, and let Uncle Mitya get on the shaft-horse! Get on, Uncle Mitya!' Uncle Mitya, a long lean peasant with a red beard, mounted the shaft-horse and looked like the village belfry or like the crane with which they draw water from the well. The coachman lashed the horses but it was no use, Uncle Mitya was no help at all. 'Stay, stay,' shouted the peasants. 'You get on the trace-horse, Uncle Mitya, and let Uncle Minyay get on the shaft-horse.' Uncle Minyay, a broad-shouldered peasant with a coal-black beard and a paunch that looked like the gigantic samovar in which

honey posset is brewed for the chilly crowds in a market, jumped with gusto on to the shaft-horse who was almost bowed to the ground under his weight. 'Now it will be all right,' bawled the peasants. 'Make him smart, make him smart! Touch him up with the whip, that one yonder, the bay. Make him wriggle like a daddy-long-legs.' But seeing that no progress was made and that no whipping was any use, Uncle Mitya and Uncle Minyay both mounted the shaft-horse while Andryushka got on to the trace-horse. At last the coachman, losing patience, drove both uncles away; and it was as well that he did, for the horses were in a steam as though they had raced from one posting station to another without taking breath. He gave them a minute to rest and then they set off of themselves. While all this was going on, Tchitchikov looked very attentively at the young lady in the carriage. Several times he made an effort to speak to her, but he somehow could not bring himself to do so. And meanwhile the ladies drove off, the pretty little head together with the delicate features and the slender waist vanished almost like a vision—and there remained only the road, the chaise, the three horses with whom the reader is familiar, Selifan, Tchitchikov, the desolate flatness of the surrounding fields. Everywhere in life, wherever it may be, among the coarse, cruelly poor, and dirtily squalid lower ranks, or among the monotonously frigid and tediously decorous higher orders—in every class a man is met at least once in his life by an apparition unlike

anything that it has been his lot to see before, which for once awakens in him a feeling unlike what he is destined to feel all his life. In every life, joy flashes gay and radiant across the sorrows of all sorts of which the web of our life is woven, just as sometimes a splendid carriage with glittering harness, picturesque horses, and windows flashing in the light suddenly darts by some poor squalid little village which has till then seen nought but rustic carts: and long afterwards the peasants stand, hat in hand, gaping with open mouths, though the wonderful carriage has long since whirled by and vanished out of sight. Just in the same way this fair young lady has appeared utterly unexpectedly in our story and vanished again. Had some boy of twenty been in Tchitchikov's place—an hussar, a student, or simply a young man beginning his career in life—my God, what would not have awakened, what would not have stirred, what would not have spoken in his heart! For long minutes he would have stood bewildered on the spot, gazing vacantly into the distance, forgetting the road and the reproofs and chidings that await him for his delay, forgetting himself, his duty, the world and everything in it.

But our hero was a man of mature years and of a cool and calculating temper. He too grew pensive and reflected but more practically, his reflections were not so irresponsible but were, one may say, very much to the point. 'A fine wench,' he said, opening his snuff-box and taking a pinch of snuff. 'But what is it that is especially fine in

her? What is best in her is that she is evidently fresh from some school or college, that there is so far nothing of what is called feminine about her, which is precisely what is most distasteful in them. Now she is like a child; everything about her is simple; she says what comes into her head, laughs when she is inclined to laugh. Anything could be made of her. She might become something wonderful and she might turn out worthless—and she will turn out worthless, too! Wait till the mammas and the aunties set to work on her. In one year they will fill her head with such feminine flummery that her own father will hardly know her. Conceit and affectation will make their appearance; she will begin to move and hold herself according to the instructions she has learned; she will puzzle her brains and consider with whom and how much to talk, how and at whom she must look; every minute she will be afraid of saying more than she ought; she will get caught in the snares herself at last and will end by lying all her life, and the devil knows what she will turn into!’ At this point he paused for a minute and then added: ‘But it would be interesting to know who she is, and what her father is, whether he is a wealthy landowner of respectable character or simply a well-meaning man with a fortune made in the service. Why, supposing there is a nice little dowry of two hundred thousand with that girl, it would make her a very tempting little morsel. She might, so to speak, make the happiness of the right sort of man.’ The thought of two hundred

thousand took such an attractive shape in his mind that he began to be inwardly annoyed with himself for not having ascertained from the postillion or the coachman who the ladies were. Soon however the sight of Sobakevitch's house in the distance distracted his thoughts and made them turn to their invariable subject.

The village struck him as being a fairly large one. Two copses, one of pines, the other of birches, lay like two wings to right and left of it, one darker, one lighter in colour; in the middle was a wooden house with a mezzanine, a red roof, and dark-grey or, to be more accurate, natural-coloured walls; the house was after the style of those that are built amongst us in Russia for military settlements or German colonists. It was noticeable that the architect had been in continual conflict with the owner's tastes in the building of it. The architect was a pedant and aimed at symmetry, while the owner aimed at comfort and had consequently boarded up all the windows at one side, and in place of them had cut one tiny one probably required for a dark loft. The front façade too had not succeeded in getting into the centre in spite of the architect's struggles, for the owner had insisted on rejecting a column on one side, so that instead of four columns as in the original design, there were only three. The yard was enclosed by a strong and immensely thick wooden fence. It was evident that Sobakevitch thought a great deal of solidity. Beams heavy and thick enough to last for centuries had been used

for the stables, the barns, and the kitchens. The peasants' huts in the village were also wonderfully solid: there were no brick walls, carved patterns, or anything fanciful, but everything was firmly and properly built. Even the well was made of that strong oak which is usually reserved for mills and ships. In short, wherever he looked everything was solid and substantial in a strong and clumsy style. As he drove up to the steps he observed two faces peeping out of the window almost at the same moment: a woman's face in a cap as long and narrow as a cucumber, and a man's as full and round as the Moldavian pumpkins called *gorlyankas* out of which the Russians make balalaikas, light two-stringed balalaikas, the adornment and delight of the jaunty twenty-year-old peasant lad, the saucy dandy winking and whistling to the white-bosomed, white-throated maidens who gather round to listen to the tinkle of his thrumming. The two faces at the window vanished simultaneously. A flunkey in a grey livery with a light-blue stand-up collar came out on to the steps and led Tchitchikov into the hall, where the master of the house was already awaiting him. Seeing his visitor, he said abruptly, 'Please,' and conducted him into the inner apartments.

When Tchitchikov stole a sidelong glance at Sobakevitch, he struck him on this occasion as being extremely like a middle-sized bear. To complete the resemblance his dress coat was precisely the colour of a bear's skin, his sleeves were long, his trousers were long, he ambled from

side to side as he walked and was continually treading on other people's feet. His face was burnt as dark a red as a copper penny. We all know that there are a great many faces in the world over the carving of which nature has spent no great pains, has used no delicate tools such as files or gimlets, but has simply rough-hewn them with a swing of the arm: one stroke of the axe and there's a nose, another and there are the lips, the eyes are bored with a great drill, and without polishing it off, nature thrusts it into the world, saying, 'This will do.' Just such an uncouth and strangely hewn countenance was that of Sobakevitch: he held it rather drooping than erect, he did not turn his neck at all, and in consequence of this immobility he rarely looked at the person to whom he was speaking but always stared away at the corner of the stove or at the door. Tchitchikov stole another glance at him as they reached the dining-room; he was a bear, a regular bear! To complete the strange resemblance, his name was actually Mihail Semyonovitch. . . . Knowing his habit of treading on people's feet, Tchitchikov moved his own feet very cautiously and made way for him to go first. Apparently Sobakevitch was aware of this failing and at once asked whether he had caused him any inconvenience, but Tchitchikov thanked him and said that he had so far suffered no discomfort.

When they entered the drawing-room Sobakevitch pointed to an empty chair and again said,

‘Please.’ Sitting down, Tchitchikov glanced at the walls and the pictures hanging on them. They were all portraits of gallant heroes, Greek generals painted at full length, Mavrocordato in red trousers and uniform, with spectacles on his nose, Miaoulis, Kanaris. All these heroes had such thick calves and incredible moustaches that they sent a shiver down one’s spine. Among these Greek heroes, goodness knows why, was a portrait of Bagration, a lean gaunt figure with little flags and cannons below in a very narrow frame. Then followed the portrait of the Greek heroine Bobelina whose leg seemed stouter than the whole body of a dandy such as those that fill our drawing-rooms nowadays. It seemed as though the master of the house, being himself strong and sturdy, desired to have his room decorated with people strong and sturdy also. Near Bobelina, right in the window, hung a cage out of which peeped a thrush of a dark colour speckled with white who was also much like Sobakevitch. The master of the house and his guest had not sat in silence for more than two minutes, when the drawing-room door opened and the lady of the house, a very tall figure in a cap, adorned with home-dyed ribbons, walked in. She entered with dignity, holding her head as erect as a palm-tree.

‘This is my Feoduliya Ivanovna,’ said Sobakevitch.

Tchitchikov stooped to kiss the hand of Feoduliya Ivanovna while she almost thrust it at his lips. As he kissed it he had the opportunity of

observing that it had been washed in cucumber water.

‘My love,’ Sobakevitch went on, ‘let me introduce Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikov; I had the honour of making his acquaintance at the governor’s and at the police-captain’s.’

Feoduliya Ivanovna asked him to sit down, like her husband saying no more than ‘Please,’ with a motion of her head like an actress in the part of a queen. Then she seated herself upon the sofa, wrapping her merino shawl about her, and sat without moving an eye or an eyebrow.

Tchitchikov again raised his eyes and again saw Kanaris with his thick calves and endless moustaches, Bobelina and the thrush in the cage.

For the space of fully five minutes they all remained silent; the only sound was the tap of the thrush’s beak on the cage as he picked up grains from the floor of it. Tchitchikov looked round at the room again and everything in it, everything was solid and clumsy to the last degree and had a strange resemblance to the master of the house. In a corner of the room stood a paunchy walnut bureau on four very absurd legs looking exactly like a bear. The table, the armchairs, the chairs were all of the heaviest and most uncomfortable shape; in short, every chair, every object seemed to be saying, ‘I am a Sobakevitch too!’ or ‘I too am very like Sobakevitch!’

‘We were speaking of you last Thursday at Ivan Grigoryevitch’s, I mean the president of the court of justice,’ said Tchitchikov at last, seeing

that no one was disposed to begin the conversation. 'We had a very pleasant evening.'

'Yes, I wasn't at the president's that day,' answered Sobakevitch.

'He is a splendid man!'

'Who's that?' asked Sobakevitch, staring at the corner of the stove.

'The president.'

'Well, perhaps he seems so to you. Although he is a freemason, he is the greatest fool on earth.'

Tchitchikov was a little disconcerted by this rather harsh description, but recovering himself he went on: 'Of course every man has his weaknesses, but the governor now, what a delightful man!'

'The governor a delightful man?'

'Yes, isn't he?'

'He is the greatest ruffian on earth!'

'What, the governor a ruffian!' said Tchitchikov, and was utterly at a loss to understand how the governor could be a ruffian. 'I must own I should never have thought so,' he continued. 'Allow me to observe, however, that his behaviour is not at all suggestive of it: on the contrary, in fact, there is a great deal of softness in him.' At this juncture he referred in support of his words to the purses embroidered by the governor's own hands; and alluded appreciatively to the amiable expression of his face.

'He has the face of a ruffian!' said Sobakevitch. 'If you put a knife in his hand and let him loose on the public highway he would cut your throat

for a farthing, that he would ! He and the vice-governor are a pair of them—a regular Gog and Magog.’

‘He is on bad terms with them,’ Tchitchikov thought to himself. ‘But I ’ll begin talking about the police-master, I fancy they are friends.’ ‘Though as far as I am concerned,’ he said, ‘I must own the one I like best is the police-master. Such a straightforward, open character ; there is a look of such simple warm-heartedness in his face.’

‘A scoundrel !’ said Sobakevitch with perfect coolness ; ‘he ’ll betray you and cheat you and then he ’ll dine with you. I know them all : they are all rascals : the whole town is the same. Scoundrels sit upon scoundrels and prosecute scoundrels. They are all Judases. There is only one decent man among them, the prosecutor, and even he is a pig, to tell the truth.’

After such eulogistic though somewhat brief biographies, Tchitchikov saw it would be useless to mention any other officials, and remembered that Sobakevitch did not like to hear any one spoken well of.

‘Well, my love, shall we go in to dinner ?’ said Madame Sobakevitch to her husband.

‘Please !’ said Sobakevitch. Whereupon the two gentlemen, going up to the table which was laid with savouries, duly drank a glass of vodka each ; they took a preliminary snack as is done all over the vast expanse of Russia, throughout the towns and villages, that is, tasted various

salted dishes and other stimulating dainties; then all proceeded to the dining-room; the hostess sailed in at their head like a goose swimming. The small table was laid for four. In the fourth place there very shortly appeared—it is hard to say definitely who—whether a married lady, or a girl, a relation, a housekeeper or simply some one living in the house—a thing without a cap, about thirty years of age, in a bright-coloured handkerchief. There are persons who exist in the world not as primary objects but as incidental spots or specks on objects. They sit in the same place and hold their head immovably; one is almost tempted to take them for furniture and imagine that no word has ever issued from those lips; but in some remote region, in the maids' quarters or the storeroom, it is quite another story!

‘The cabbage soup is particularly good to-day,’ said Sobakevitch, taking spoonfuls of the soup and helping himself to an immense portion of a well-known delicacy which is served with cabbage soup and consists of sheep’s stomach, stuffed with buckwheat, brains and sheep’s trotters. ‘You won’t find a dish like this in town,’ he went on, addressing Tchitchikov, ‘the devil only knows what they give you there!’

‘The governor keeps a good table, however,’ said Tchitchikov.

‘But do you know what it is all made of? You won’t eat it when you do know.’

‘I don’t know how the dishes were cooked, I

can't judge of that ; but the pork chops and the stewed fish were excellent.'

'You fancy so. You see I know what they buy at the market. That scoundrelly cook who has been trained in France buys a cat and skins it and sends it up to table for a hare.'

'Faugh, what unpleasant things you say!' said his wife.

'Well, my love! That's how they do things; it's not my fault, that's how they do things, all of them. All the refuse that our Alkulka throws, if I may be permitted to say so, into the rubbish pail, they put into the soup, yes, into the soup! In it goes!'

'You always talk about such things at table,' his wife protested again.

'Well, my love,' said Sobakevitch, 'if I did the same myself, you might complain, but I tell you straight that I am not going to eat filth. If you sprinkle frogs with sugar I wouldn't put them into my mouth, and I wouldn't taste oysters, either: I know what oysters are like. Take some mutton,' he went on, addressing Tchitchikov. 'This is saddle of mutton with grain, not the fricassees that they make in gentlemen's kitchens out of mutton which has been lying about in the market-place for days. The French and German doctors have invented all that; I'd have them all hanged for it. They have invented a treatment too, the hunger cure! Because they have a thin-blooded German constitution, they fancy they can treat the Russian stomach too. No,

it's all wrong, it's all their fancies, it's all . . .'

Here Sobakevitch shook his head wrathfully. 'They talk of enlightenment, enlightenment, and this enlightenment is . . . faugh! I might use another word for it but it would be improper at the dinner table. It is not like that in my house. If we have pork we put the whole pig on the table, if it's mutton, we bring in the whole sheep, if it's a goose, the whole goose! I had rather eat only two dishes, and eat my fill of them.' Sobakevitch confirmed this in practice; he put half a saddle of mutton on his plate, and ate it all, gnawing and sucking every little bone.

'Yes,' thought Tchitchikov, 'the man knows what's what.'

'It's not like that in my house,' said Sobakevitch, wiping his fingers on a dinner napkin, 'I don't do things like a Plyushkin: he has eight hundred souls and he dines and sups worse than any shepherd.'

'Who is this Plyushkin?' inquired Tchitchikov.

'A scoundrel,' answered Sobakevitch. 'You can't fancy what a miser he is. The convicts in prison are better fed than he is: he has starved all his servants to death . . .'

'Really,' Tchitchikov put in with interest. 'And do you actually mean that his serfs have died in considerable numbers?'

'They die off like flies.'

'Really, like flies? Allow me to ask how far away does he live?'

'Four miles.'

‘ Four miles ! ’ exclaimed Tchitchikov, and was even aware of a slight palpitation of the heart. ‘ But when one drives out of your gate, is it to the right or to the left ? ’

‘ I don’t advise you even to learn the road to that cur’s,’ said Sobakevitch. ‘ There is more excuse for visiting the lowest haunt than visiting him.’

‘ Oh, I did not ask for any special . . . but simply because I am interested in knowing all about the locality,’ Tchitchikov replied.

The saddle of mutton was followed by curd cheese-cakes, each one of which was much larger than a plate, then a turkey as big as a calf, stuffed with all sorts of good things : eggs, rice, kidneys, and goodness knows what. With this the dinner ended, but when they had risen from the table Tchitchikov felt as though he were two or three stones heavier. They went into the drawing-room where they found a saucer of jam already awaiting them—not a pear, nor a plum, nor any kind of berry—and neither of the gentlemen touched it. The lady of the house went out of the room to put out some more on other saucers.

Taking advantage of her absence, Tchitchikov turned to Sobakevitch, who lying in an easy-chair was merely gasping after his ample repast and emitting from his throat undefinable sounds while he crossed himself and continually put his hand before his mouth.

Tchitchikov addressed him as follows : ‘ I should like to have a few words with you about a little matter of business.’

‘Here is some more jam,’ said the lady of the house, returning with a saucer, ‘it’s very choice, made with honey!’

‘We will have some of it later on,’ said Sobakevitch. ‘You go to your own room now. Pavel Ivanovitch and I will take off our coats and have a little nap.’

The lady began suggesting that she should send for feather beds and pillows, but her husband said, ‘There’s no need, we can doze in our easy-chairs,’ and she withdrew.

Sobakevitch bent his head slightly, and prepared to hear what the business might be.

Tchitchikov approached the subject indirectly, touched on the Russian empire in general, and spoke with great appreciation of its vast extent, said that even the ancient Roman empire was not so large, and that foreigners might well marvel at it . . . (Sobakevitch still listened with his head bowed), and that in accordance with the existing ordinances of the government, whose fame had no equal, souls on the census list who had ended their earthly career were, until the next census was taken, reckoned as though they were alive, in order to avoid burdening the government departments with a multitude of petty and unimportant details and increasing the complexity of the administrative machinery so complicated as it is . . . (Sobakevitch still listened with his head bowed), and that, justifiable as this arrangement was, it put however a somewhat heavy burden on many landowners, compelling

them to pay the tax as though for living serfs, and that, through a sentiment of personal respect for him, he was prepared to some extent to relieve him of this burdensome obligation. In regard to the real subject of his remarks, Tchitchikov expressed himself very cautiously and never spoke of the souls as dead, but invariably as non-existent.

Sobakevitch still listened as before with his head bent, and not a trace of anything approaching expression showed on his face. It seemed as though in that body there was no soul at all, or if there were, that it was not in its proper place, but, as with the immortal Boney,¹ somewhere far away and covered with so thick a shell that whatever was stirring at the bottom of it produced not the faintest ripple on the surface.

‘And so . . .?’ said Tchitchikov, waiting not without some perturbation for an answer.

‘You want the dead souls?’ inquired Sobakevitch very simply, with no sign of surprise, as though they had been talking of corn.

‘Yes,’ said Tchitchikov, and again he softened the expression, adding, ‘non-existent ones.’

‘There are some; to be sure there are,’ said Sobakevitch.

‘Well, if you have any, you will doubtless be glad to get rid of them?’

‘Certainly, I am willing to sell them,’ said Sobakevitch, slightly raising his head, and reflecting that doubtless the purchaser would make some profit out of them.

¹ An ogre-like character in many Russian fairy-tales.—
TRANSLATOR’S NOTE.

‘Deuce take it!’ thought Tchitchikov to himself. ‘He is ready to sell them before I drop a hint of it!’ And aloud he said, ‘And at what price, for instance? Though, indeed, it is a queer sort of goods . . . it seems odd to speak of the price.’

‘Well, not to ask you too much, a hundred roubles apiece,’ said Sobakevitch.

‘A hundred!’ cried Tchitchikov, staring into his face, with his mouth open, not knowing whether his ears had deceived him or whether Sobakevitch’s tongue in its heavy clumsiness had brought out the wrong word.

‘Oh, is that too dear for you?’ said Sobakevitch, and then added, ‘Why, what may your price be then?’

‘My price! We must be making some mistake or misunderstanding each other, and have forgotten what it is we are talking about. I protest, laying my hand on my heart, I can offer no more than eighty kopecks a soul,—that’s the very highest price!’

‘Ech, what an idea, eighty kopecks! . . .’

‘Well, in my judgment, I can offer no more.’

‘Why, I am not selling bark shoes.’

‘You must admit, however, that they are not men either.’

‘Do you suppose you would find anybody fool enough to sell you a soul on the census for a few paltry kopecks.’

‘But excuse me, why do you speak of them like that? Why, the souls have been dead a long while, nothing is left but an insubstantial name.’

However, to avoid further discussion, I'll give you a rouble and a half if you like, but beyond that I cannot go.'

'You ought to be ashamed to mention such a sum. You are haggling, tell me your real price.'

'I cannot give more, Mihail Semyonovitch; you may believe my word, I cannot; what cannot be done, cannot be done,' said Tchitchikov; he added half a rouble, however.

'But why are you so stingy?' said Sobakevitch; 'it really is not dear! Another man would cheat you and sell you some rubbish instead of souls; but mine are as sound as a nut, all first-class: if not craftsmen, they are sturdy peasants of one sort or another. Look here, Miheyev the wheelwright, for instance, he never made a carriage that wasn't on springs. And they were not like some of the Moscow workmanship, made to last an hour . . . all so solid . . . he lines them himself and varnishes them!'

Tchitchikov was opening his lips to say that Miheyev had however left this world; but Sobakevitch was carried away, as the saying is, by his own eloquence, and the vehemence and flow of his language was surprising.

'And Stepan Probka the carpenter! I'll stake my head you would never find another peasant like him. What a giant of strength he was! If he had served in the Guards, God knows what they would have given him, over seven foot high!'

Tchitchikov tried again to say that Probka too

had departed this life ; but such streams of words followed that he had no choice but to listen.

‘Milushkin the bricklayer could build a stove in any house you like. Maxim Telyatnikov the bootmaker : no sooner does he put the awl through the leather than it’s a boot ; and you must be thankful that it is a boot ; and he never touched a drop. And Yeremy Sorokoplyohin ! That peasant alone is worth all the rest. He traded in Moscow and sent me as much as five hundred roubles at a time in lieu of labour. That’s the sort of fellows they are ! They are not what a Plyushkin would sell you.’

‘But excuse me,’ said Tchitchikov at last, amazed at this flood of eloquence which seemed as though it would be endless. ‘Why are you enumerating all their qualifications ? They are no good now, you know, they are all dead. A dead man is no use even to prop up a fence, as the proverb says.’

‘Yes, of course they are dead,’ said Sobakevitch, as though reflecting and recalling the fact that they really were dead ; and then he added : ‘though it must be said, that these fellows who are reckoned alive are not worth calling men, they are no better than flies.’

‘Still they do exist, while the others are a dream.’

‘But no, they are not a dream ! I tell you, Miheyev was a man you won’t find the like of again ! He was such a giant, he couldn’t have walked into this room : no, he’s not a dream !

He had more strength in his huge great shoulders than a horse. I should like to know where else you would find a dream like that!’ These last words he uttered, addressing the portraits of Bagration and Kolokotrones, as commonly happens with people who are talking, when one of them for some unexplained reason addresses himself not to the person whom his words concern but to some third person who happens to be present, even a total stranger from whom he knows that he will receive no answer, no opinion, no support, though he stares at him as intently as if appealing to him as an arbitrator; and, somewhat embarrassed, the stranger does not for the first minute know whether to answer him about the business of which he has heard nothing, or to stay as he is, maintaining perfect propriety of demeanour and afterwards to get up and walk away.

‘No, I can’t give more than two roubles,’ said Tchitchikov.

‘If you like, that you may not complain that I have asked you too much and will not show you any consideration, if you like—seventy-five roubles per soul—it’s only because you are a friend really!’

‘Does he take me for a fool or what?’ Tchitchikov thought to himself, and then he added aloud: ‘I am really puzzled: it seems to me as though we are taking part in some theatrical performance or farce: that’s the only way I can explain it to myself . . . I believe you are a fairly intelligent man, you have all the advan-

tages of education. Why, the goods you are selling are simply . . . ough! What are they worth? What use are they to any one?’

‘But you see you are buying them, so they are of use.’

At this point Tchitchikov bit his lip and could not think of a suitable answer. He was beginning to say something about private family circumstances but Sobakevitch answered simply :

‘I don’t want to know your circumstances, I don’t meddle in other people’s private affairs, that’s your business. You have need of the souls, I am selling them, and you will regret it if you don’t buy them.’

‘Two roubles,’ said Tchitchikov.

‘Ugh, really, “the magpie knows one name and calls all men the same,” as the proverb has it: since you have pitched on two, you won’t budge. Do give your real price!’

‘Oh, deuce take him!’ thought Tchitchikov, ‘I’ll give him another half rouble, the cur.’—‘Well, if you like I’ll say another half rouble.’

‘Oh very well, and I’ll give you my final word too: fifty roubles! It’s really selling at a loss, you would never buy such fellows anywhere else!’

‘What a close-fisted brute!’ Tchitchikov said to himself; and then continued aloud with some vexation: ‘Why really, upon my soul . . . as though it were something real! Why, I could get them for nothing elsewhere. What’s more, any one else would be glad to let me have them simply to get rid of them. Only a fool would

want to keep them and go on paying the tax on them !’

‘ But, you know, a transaction of this kind—I say this between ourselves as a friend—is not permissible everywhere, and if I or some one else were to mention it, such a man would have no security for the purchase or profitable fulfilment of the contract.’

‘ What the devil is he hinting at, the scoundrel !’ thought Tchitchikov, and at once brought out with a most unconcerned air : ‘ It is just as you like, I am not buying them from any special necessity as you imagine, but just . . . simply from an inner prompting. If you won’t take two and a half roubles, good-bye !’

‘ There’s no wringing it out of him, he’s stubborn !’ thought Sobakevitch. ‘ Well, God bless you, give me thirty and you shall have them !’

‘ No, I see you don’t want to sell them, good-bye !’

‘ Excuse me, excuse me,’ said Sobakevitch, retaining his hold of Tchitchikov’s hand and stepping on his foot, for our hero forgot to be on his guard and the punishment for this carelessness made him flinch and stand on one leg. ‘ I beg your pardon ! I’m afraid I have caused you discomfort. Please sit down here ! Please !’

Whereupon he sat Tchitchikov down in an easy-chair with a certain dexterity, like a bear who has been trained and knows how to turn somersaults and to perform various tricks when he is asked such questions as : ‘ Come show us, Misha, how

do peasant women have a steam bath?' or 'How do little children steal peas, Misha?'

'I am wasting time really, I must make haste.'

'Stay just a minute longer, and I'll say something you would like to hear.' At this point Sobakevitch moved to a seat near him, and said softly in his ear as though it were a secret, 'Will a quarter suit you?'

'You mean twenty-five roubles? No, no, no! I wouldn't give a quarter of a quarter, I won't add a single farthing.'

Sobakevitch did not speak; Tchitchikov too was silent. The silence lasted for two minutes. Bagration with his eagle nose looked down attentively at the transaction.

'What is your final price?' Sobakevitch asked at last.

'Two and a half.'

'You have a soul like a boiled turnip. You might at least give me three roubles!'

'I can't.'

'Oh, there's no doing anything with you. Very well! It's a loss. But there, I'm like a dog, I can't help doing anything I can to please a fellow creature. I suppose I must make out a deed of purchase, so that it may all be done properly.'

'Of course.'

'And what's more, I shall have to go to the town.'

So the business was settled, they both decided to visit the town next day and to arrange the deed of purchase. Tchitchikov asked for a list of the

peasants. Sobakevitch readily agreed, went to his bureau at once, and began writing with his own hand not merely a list of all the names but also an enumeration of their valuable qualities.

And Tchitchikov, having nothing better to do, and being seated behind him, scrutinised his ample frame. As he looked at his back, broad as a thick-set Vyatka horse, and at his legs which looked like the iron posts stuck in pavements, he could not help inwardly exclaiming: 'Ough, God has been bountiful to you! It is a case of what they call, badly cut but strongly sewn! . . . I wonder whether you were born a bear or have you been turned into a bear by living in the wilds, tilling the cornfields, dealing with peasants, and through all that have you become what they call a "fist"? But no; I believe you would have been just the same if you had had a fashionable education, had gone into society and lived in Petersburg instead of in the wilds. The only difference is, that now you will gorge upon half a saddle of mutton and grain, and eat cheese-cakes as big as a plate, while in Petersburg you would have eaten cutlets with truffles. As it is, you have peasants in your power, you get on well with them and don't ill-treat them because they are yours, and it would be to your disadvantage; but up in town you would have clerks under you whom you would have bullied horribly, reflecting that they were not your serfs, or you would have stolen government money! No, if a man has a close fist there is no making him open it! Or if he does open

one or two fingers, it makes it all the worse. If he skims the surface of some branch of knowledge, afterwards when he is in a prominent position, he'll make those who really know something of the subject feel it! And maybe he will say afterwards too: "Let me show what I can do!" And then he'll invent such a sage regulation that many people will have to smart for it. . . . Ough, if all men were as close-fisted . . .'

'The list is ready!' said Sobakevitch turning round.

'Is it ready? Please hand it over!' He ran his eyes over it and was surprised at its neatness and precision; not only the trade, the calling, the age, and family circumstances were minutely entered, but there were even marginal notes regarding behaviour and sobriety—in fact it was a pleasure to look at it.

'Now for the deposit, if you please,' said Sobakevitch.

'What do you want a deposit for? You shall have all the money at once in the town.'

'It's always done,' protested Sobakevitch.

'I don't know how I am to give it you, I have not brought any money with me. But here, I have ten roubles.'

'What's the good of ten? Give me fifty at least.'

Tchitchikov was about to protest that he had not got it; but Sobakevitch declared with such conviction that he had, that he brought out another note, saying: 'Here is another fifteen

roubles for you, making twenty-five altogether. But please give me a receipt.'

'Yes, but why do you want a receipt?'

'It's always better to have a receipt, you know. In case of accidents . . . anything may happen.'

'Very good, give the money here.'

'What do you want the money for? Here it is in my hand. As soon as you have written the receipt, you shall have it the same minute.'

'But excuse me, how can I write the receipt: I must see the money first.'

Tchitchikov let Sobakevitch take the notes from his hand, and the latter, going up to the table and covering the notes with his left hand, with the other wrote on a scrap of paper that a deposit of twenty-five roubles on a purchase of souls had been paid in full. After signing the receipt he looked through the notes once more.

'This note's an old one,' he commented, holding one of them up to the light, 'rather frayed; but there, one can't look at that between friends.'

'The fist, the fist!' Tchitchikov thought to himself, 'and he's a brute into the bargain.'

'And don't you want any of the female sex?'

'No, thank you.'

'I wouldn't charge you much for them. For the sake of our good acquaintance, I will only ask a rouble apiece.'

'No, I have no need of females.'

'Well, since you don't want any, it is useless to discuss it. Every one to his taste, one man

loves the priest and another the priest's wife, as the proverb says.'

'Another thing I want to ask you is that this transaction should be strictly between ourselves,' said Tchitchikov as he said good-bye.

'Oh, that is a matter of course. There is no reason to mix a third person up in it; what is done in all straightforwardness between two friends should be left to their mutual friendship. Good-bye. Thank you for your visit; I beg you to think of us again; when you have a free hour, come to dinner and spend a little time with us. Possibly we may be able to be of service to each other again.'

'Not if I know it,' Tchitchikov thought to himself as he got into his chaise. 'He has squeezed two and a half roubles a soul out of me, the damned skinflint!'

He was displeased with Sobakevitch's behaviour. After all, look at it how you would, he was an acquaintance, and they had both met at the governor's and at the police-master's, but he had treated him exactly as though he were a stranger and squeezed money out of him! When the chaise had driven out of the yard he looked back and saw that Sobakevitch was still standing on the steps and seemed to be watching to see which way his guest was going.

'The rascal, he is still standing there!' he muttered through his teeth, and he bade Selifan turn towards the peasants' huts and drive away so that the carriage could not be seen from the

house. He wanted to drive to Plyushkin, whose serfs, according to Sobakevitch, were dying off like flies; but he did not want Sobakevitch to know it. When the chaise had reached the end of the village, he called to the first peasant he met, a man who had picked up a very thick log, and like an indefatigable ant was dragging it on his shoulders along the road towards his hut.

‘Hey, bushy beard! How’s one to get from here to Plyushkin’s without passing your master’s house?’

The peasant seemed to be perplexed by the question.

‘Why, don’t you know?’

‘No, sir, I don’t know.’

‘Tut, tut! Why, you have grey hairs coming! Don’t you know the miser Plyushkin who doesn’t feed his serfs properly?’

‘Oh, the . . . in rags and patches!’ cried the peasant. He put in a substantive which was very apt but impossible in polite conversation, and so we omit it. It may however be surmised that the expression was very appropriate, for long after the peasant was out of sight, when they had driven a good way further, Tchitchikov was still laughing as he sat in his chaise. The Russian people express themselves vividly. And if a nickname is bestowed on any one, it becomes part and parcel of him, he carries it along with him into the service and into retirement and to Petersburg and to the ends of the earth. And whatever dodge he tries to ennoble his nickname, even

though he may get the scribbling gentry for a consideration to trace his pedigree from an ancient aristocratic family, it is all of no use : the very sound of the nickname, like the caw of a crow, betrays where the bird has come from. A word aptly uttered or written cannot be cut away by an axe. And how good the sayings are that come out of the depths of Russia, where there are neither Germans nor Finns nor any foreigners, but only the native, living, nimble Russian intelligence, which never fumbles for a word nor broods over a phrase like a sitting hen, but sticks it on like a passport to be carried all one's life, and there is no need to add a description of your nose or your lips : with one stroke you are drawn from head to foot !

Like the innumerable multitude of churches and monasteries with their cupolas, domes and crosses scattered over holy, pious Russia, swarms the innumerable multitude of races, generations and peoples, a many-coloured crowd shifting hither and thither over the face of the earth. And each people, bearing within itself the pledge of powers, full of creative, spiritual faculties, of its own conspicuous individuality, and of other gifts of God, is individually distinguished each by its own peculiar sayings, in which, whatever subject it describes, part of its own character is reflected. The sayings of the Briton resound with the wisdom of the heart and sage comprehension of life ; the Frenchman's short-lived phrase is brilliant as a sprightly dandy and soon fades away ; the German

fancifully contrives his intellectually thin sayings, not within the grasp of all ; but there are no sayings of so wide a sweep and so bold an aim, none that burst from the very heart, bubble up and vibrate with life like an aptly uttered Russian saying.

CHAPTER VI

LONG ago in the days of my youth, in the days of my childhood, now vanished for ever, I used to enjoy going ^{for} or the first time to an unknown place; it made no difference to me whether it were a little village, a poor, wretched district town, a hamlet, or a suburb, my inquisitive childish eyes discovered much that was of interest in it. Every building, everything that was marked by some noticeable peculiarity arrested my attention and impressed me. Whether it were a brick government building of the usual architecture with half its windows mere blank spaces, sticking up, lonely and forlorn, in the midst of a group of one-storeyed workmen's cottages with walls of logs and shingled roofs; or a round cupola all covered with sheets of white metal, rising above the snowy, whitewashed new church, or a market, or a beau of the district who was in the town—nothing escaped my fresh, alert attention, and poking my nose out of my cart, I stared at the novel cut of some coat, and at the wooden chests of nails, of sulphur, yellow in the distance, of raisins and of soap, of which I caught glimpses through the door of a grocer's shop, together with jars of stale Moscow sweets. I stared too, at the infantry officer who had been cast by fate

from God knows what province into the boredom of this remote district, and at the dealer in his long overcoat, flying by in his racing droshky, and in my thoughts I was carried along with them into their poor lives. If a local official walked by, at once I fell to speculating where he was going, whether it was to spend the evening with some fellow-clerk, or straight home to lounge for half an hour on the steps till the twilight had turned to darkness, and then to sit down to an early supper with his mother, his wife, his wife's sister and all his family, and what their talk would be about, while a serf-girl in necklaces, or a boy in a thick, short jacket, brought in, but only after the soup, a tallow candle in a candlestick that had seen long years of service in the household. As I drove up to some landowner's village, I looked with curiosity at the tall, narrow, wooden belfry, or at the spacious old church of dark wood. Through the green of the trees the red roofs and white chimneys of the owner's house gleamed alluringly in the distance, and I waited with impatience for a gap through the gardens that screened it on both sides, that I might get a full view of its, in those days (alas!), not at all vulgar exterior, and from it I tried to guess what the owner himself was like, whether he was a fat man, and whether he had sons or a full set of six daughters with ringing girlish laughter and games, and the youngest sister, of course, a beauty, and whether they had black eyes, and whether he was a merry

fellow himself, or, gloomy as the last days of September, looked at the calendar and talked about the rye and wheat, while the young people sat bored.

Now I drive into any strange village with indifference, and with indifference look at its vulgar exterior; to my cooler gaze it is uninviting and does not amuse me, and what in former years would have set my face working with excitement and roused me to laughter and unceasing chatter now slips by me, and my lips remain sealed in unconcerned silence. Oh, my youth! Oh, my fresh eagerness!

While Tchitchikov was meditating and inwardly laughing at the nickname the peasant had given to Plyushkin, he did not notice that he had driven into the middle of a large village, with a number of peasants' huts and streets. He was soon, however, roused to notice it by a rather violent jolting, as they passed over the bridge of logs, compared with which our town bridge of cobble-stones is nothing. The logs hop up and down like the keys of a piano, and the incautious traveller gets a bump on the back of his head, or a bruise on his forehead, or may chance to bite the tip of his tongue very painfully. He noticed signs of age and decay in all the village buildings; the logs of which the huts were built were old and dark. Many of the roofs were as full of holes as a sieve; on some nothing was left but the ridge-pole and the transverse pieces like ribs. It seemed as though the owners

themselves had removed the laths and shingles, arguing, and no doubt quite correctly, that as huts cannot be roofed in the rain, while in fine weather the rain keeps off of itself, there is no need to mess about indoors, while there is plenty of room in the tavern and on the high-road—wherever once chooses, in fact. The windows in the huts had no panes, some were stuffed up with a rag or a coat. The little balconies with railings which for some inexplicable reason are put just below the roof in some Russian huts were all aslant and too black to be picturesque, even. In several places immense stacks of corn stretched in rows behind the huts, and evidently they had been standing there for years; in colour they were like an old, badly baked brick, all sorts of weeds were sprouting on the top of them, and bushes growing at the side were tangled in them. The corn was evidently the master's. Behind the stacks of corn and dilapidated roofs two village churches, standing side by side, one wooden and disused, the other built of brick with yellow walls covered with stains and cracks, stood up in the pure air and showed in glimpses, first on the right and then on the left, as the chaise turned in one direction or another. Parts of the owner's house came into sight, and at last the whole of it could be seen where there was a gap in the chain of huts, and there was the open space made by a kitchen garden or a cabbage patch, enclosed by a low, and in places, broken fence. This strange castle, which was

of quite disproportionate length, had the air of a decrepit invalid. In parts it was of one storey, in parts of two; on its dark roof, which did not everywhere furnish it with secure protection, there stood two belvederes facing each other, both were infirm, and here and there bare of the paint that had once covered them. The walls of the house showed here and there the bare laths under the plaster and had evidently suffered a great deal from all sorts of weather, rain and hurricane, and the changes of autumn. Of the windows only two were uncovered, the others were closed with shutters or even boarded up. Even the two windows were half blind. On one of them was a triangular dark patch where a piece of the blue paper in which sugar is wrapped had been pasted.

The big overgrown and neglected old garden which stretched at the back of the house, and coming out behind the village, disappeared into the open country, seemed the one refreshing feature in the great rambling village, and in its picturesque wildness was the only beautiful thing in the place. The interlacing tops of the unpruned trees lay in clouds of greenery and irregular canopies of trembling foliage against the horizon. The colossal white trunk of a birch-tree, of which the crest had been snapped off by a gale or a tempest, rose out of this green maze and stood up like a round shining marble column; the sharp slanting angle, in which it ended instead of in a capital, looked dark against

the snowy whiteness of the trunk, like a cap or a blackbird. A hop, after smothering bushes of elder, mountain-ash and hazel, and then running along the top of the whole palisade, finally darted upwards and twined round half of the broken birch-tree. After reaching the middle of it, it drooped down from it, caught on to the tops of other trees, or hung in the air, its festoons of delicate clinging tendrils faintly stirring in the breeze. Here and there, the green thicket, lighted up by the sun, parted and exposed the unlighted depths between them, yawning like a dark gulf. It was all plunged in shadow, and in its black depths there were faint glimpses of a narrow path, broken-down railings, a rickety arbour, a decaying willow stump full of holes, a grey-foliaged caragana thrusting forward like a thick brush from behind the willow, leaves and twigs interlaced and crossing one another, withered from growing so terribly close, and a young branch of maple stretching sideways its claw-like leaves, under one of which the sun, somehow piercing its way, suddenly transformed it into a transparent, fiery hand, gleaming marvellously in that dense darkness. On one side, at the very edge of the garden, a few high-growing aspens above the level of the other trees lifted high into the air immense ravens' nests upon their tremulous tops. From some of them, branches, twisted back but not yet broken off, hung downwards with their withered leaves. In short, it was all beautiful, as neither the work of nature nor

that of art is alone, but as only happens when they work together, when nature's chisel gives the final touches to the often unintelligent clumsy work of man, relieves the heavy masses, obliterates the crudely conceived symmetry, the bare gaps through which the plan is too nakedly apparent, and gives a marvellous warmth to all that has been created in the frigid stiffness of calculated neatness and accuracy.

After turning round two or three corners, our hero found himself at last in front of the house, which looked even gloomier at close quarters. The old wood of the gates and fence was covered with green lichen. The yard was crowded with buildings, servants' quarters, barns and storehouses, evidently falling into decay; on the right and the left were gates leading to other yards. There was every indication that things had once been done on a grand scale here, and now everything looked dejected. There was nothing in sight to enliven the scene, no opening doors, no servants coming out, none of the hurry and bustle of a household! Only the principal gates stood open, and they had evidently been opened merely because a peasant had driven in with a loaded cart covered with sacking; he seemed to have made his appearance expressly to bring life into the dead place; at other times it was evidently kept locked, for a huge padlock hung in the iron staple. At one of the buildings, Tchitchikov soon perceived a human figure wrangling with the peasant. For a long time he

could not make out the sex of the figure, whether it was a man or a woman. Its clothes were quite indefinite and very much like a woman's dressing-gown; on the head was a cap such as women wear in the country; only the voice struck him as rather husky for a woman's. 'Oh, a female!' he thought, and at once added, 'Oh no!' 'Of course it's a woman,' he said at last after looking more closely. The figure on its side stared intently at him too. It seemed as though a visitor were a strange marvel, for she scrutinised not only him, but Selifan and the horses from their tails to their heads. From the fact that there were keys hanging from her belt, and that she scolded the peasant in rather abusive language, Tchitchikov concluded that this was probably the housekeeper.

'I say, my good woman,' he said, getting out of the chaise, 'is the master . . . ?'

'Not at home,' answered the housekeeper, without waiting for him to finish his question, and then a moment later, added: 'What do you want?'

'I have business.'

'Go indoors,' said the housekeeper, turning round and showing him her back, dusty with flour, and a big slit in her skirt.

He stepped into a wide, dark hall, which struck as chill as a cellar. From the hall he went into a room, which was also dark, with a faint light coming from a big crack at the bottom of the door. Opening this door he found himself in

the light, and was startled at the scene of disorder that met his eyes. It looked as though they were having a house-cleaning, and all the furniture were piled up in this room. There was even a broken chair standing on a table, and near it a clock with a stationary pendulum on which a spider had already spun a web. Close by, stood a cupboard leaning sideways against the wall, with old-fashioned silver, decanters and china in it. On the bureau, inlaid with a mosaic in mother-of-pearl, bits of which had fallen out, leaving yellow gaps filled with glue, lay a vast number of all sorts of things; a pile of closely written papers, covered with a marbled egg-shaped paper-weight, green with age, and an old-fashioned book, bound in leather with a red pattern on it, a lemon shrivelled up to the size of a hazelnut, the arm of a broken easy-chair, a wineglass containing some liquid and three flies, covered with an envelope, a bit of sealing-wax, a rag that had been picked up somewhere, two pens crusted with ink, dried up as though in consumption, a toothpick yellow with age which the master might have used to pick his teeth with before the invasion of Russia by the French.

On the walls there were pictures, hung very close together and all anyhow. A long engraving, yellow with time and without a glass, depicting some sort of battle, with huge drums, shouting soldiers in three-cornered hats and drowning horses, was in a mahogany frame with thin strips

of bronze and bronze discs at the corners. Next it, filling half the wall, was a huge blackened picture in oils, depicting flowers, fruit, a cut melon, a boar's head and a duck with its head hanging down. From the middle of the ceiling, hung a chandelier in a linen cover, so thick with dust that it looked like the cocoon of a silkworm. On the floor lay a heap of coarser articles unworthy of a place on the table. It was difficult to make out precisely what was in the heap, for the dust lay on it so thick that the hands of any one who touched it at once looked like gloves; the most conspicuous objects in the heap were a piece of a broken wooden spade and the old sole of a boot. It would have been impossible to say that a living being was inhabiting this room, if a shabby old skull-cap lying on the table had not testified to his existence. While Tchitchikov was examining his strange surroundings, a side-door opened, and the same housekeeper that he had met in the yard walked in. But now he saw that it was more like a steward than a housekeeper; a housekeeper does not anyway shave a beard, while this person on the other hand did, and apparently not too often, for his chin and the lower parts of his cheeks were like those curry-combs made of wire, with which horses are combed down in the stable. Tchitchikov, assuming an inquiring expression, waited with patience to hear what the steward would say to him. The steward for his part, too, waited to see what Tchitchikov had to say to him. At last the

latter, wondering at this strange hesitation, made up his mind to ask :

‘ Where is your master ? Is he at home ? ’

‘ The master is here,’ said the steward.

‘ Where is he ? ’ Tchitchikov repeated.

‘ Why, are you blind, my good sir ? ’ said the steward. ‘ Upon my soul ! I am the master ! ’

At this our hero involuntarily stepped back and stared at him. He had met a good many sorts of people, among them some such as neither the reader nor I are ever likely to see ; but he had never seen any one like this before. There was nothing out of the way about his face, it was not unlike that of many lean old men, the only peculiarity was that his chin was very prominent, so that he always had to put his handkerchief on it to avoid spitting on it. His little eyes were not dim with age, but darted about under their overhanging brows like mice when, poking their sharp noses out of their dark holes, pricking up their ears and twitching their whiskers, they peep out to see whether the cat or a mischievous boy is lying in ambush, and sniff the very air with suspicion. His costume was a great deal more remarkable. No effort or investigation could have discovered of what his dressing-gown was composed : the sleeves and the upper part of the skirts were so greasy and shiny that they looked like the polished leather of which high boots are made ; at the back instead of two there were four tails out of which cotton wool hung in tufts ! Then there was something

round his neck, too, which it was impossible to identify: it might have been a stocking, or a bandage or a stomach-belt, but it certainly could not be a cravat. In fact, if Tchitchikov had met him thus arrayed outside a church he would probably have given him a copper, for to our hero's credit it must be said, that he had a compassionate heart, and could never refrain from giving a poor man a copper. But before him stood not a beggar but a landowner. This landowner had more than a thousand souls, and one might try in vain to find another with so much corn, grain, flour, simply in stacks, with storehouses and granaries and drying sheds, piled up with such masses of linen, cloth, sheepskins, dressed and undressed, dried fish, all sorts of garden produce and fruits and mushrooms from the woods. If any one had caught sight of him in his work yard where he had stores of wood of all sorts and vessels never used, he might have fancied that he somehow had been transported to the 'chip fair' in Moscow, where brisk mothers-in-law repair daily with their cooks behind them to replenish their household stocks, and where wooden articles of all sorts, nailed together, turned, dove-tailed and woven, lie in white heaps—tubs, mincers, buckets, casks, wooden jugs with spouts and without spouts, loving cups, bark baskets, baskets in which the women keep their spinning materials and all sorts of odds and ends, baskets of thin bent aspen wood, baskets of plaited birch-bark and many other articles in use by rich

and poor in Russia. One might wonder what Plyushkin wanted with such a mass of things. He could not have used them all in his lifetime, even if his estate had been twice the size it was, but all this was not enough for him. Not satisfied with it, he used to go every day about the streets of his village, peeping under bridges and planks, and everything he came across, an old sole, a peasant woman's rag, an iron nail, a bit of broken earthenware, he dragged home with him, and added to the heap that Tchitchikov had noticed in the corner. 'Yonder is the old angler at his sport again!' the peasants used to say when they saw him in search of booty. And indeed there was no need to sweep the street after he had been over it. If an officer riding along the road dropped a spur, the spur immediately found its way to the same heap. If a peasant woman loitering at the well forgot her pail, he carried off the pail too. When, however, a peasant caught him in the act, he gave up his plunder without dispute; but, once it had got into the heap, then it was all over with it: he would swear that the thing had been bought by him at some time from somebody, or that it had come down to him from his grandfather. In his room he picked up everything he saw on the floor, sealing-wax, scraps of pape., feathers, and laid them all on the bureau or on the window-sill.

And yet there had been a time when he was only a careful manager! He was married and

the father of a family, and the neighbours would drive over to dine with him and learn from him how to manage an estate with wise economy. The work was done briskly and everything followed its regular course ; the mills and the fullers' works were running, the cloth factories, the carpenters' lathes, and the spinning wheels were all busily at work ; the master's sharp eye was everywhere looking into everything, and like an industrious spider he ran anxiously but efficiently from one end to another of his industrial web. His features did not express over-intense feelings, and his eyes were full of intelligence. His words were weighty with experience and knowledge of the world, and his guests were glad to listen to him. The lady of the house, gracious and ready of speech, was famed for her hospitality ; two little daughters, both fair and fresh as roses, came out to greet visitors, the son, a free and easy lad, would run in and kiss every one, without considering whether his attentions were welcome. All the windows in the house were open to the light. In the entre-sol were the apartments of the French tutor, who shaved to perfection and was devoted to shooting : he brought home a woodcock or a wild duck nearly every day for dinner, though sometimes nothing but sparrows' eggs, which he would have made into an omelette for himself, as no one else in the house would touch them. His compatriot, the daughters' governess, lived in the entre-sol also. The master of the house came to dinner in a some-

what shabby but tidy frock-coat : there were no holes in the elbows and no sign of a patch anywhere. But the kind mistress of the house died ; the keys and with them the petty cares of house-keeping passed into his hands. Plyushkin became more anxious and, like all widowers, more suspicious and niggardly. He could not altogether depend on his elder daughter, Alexandra Stepanovna, and indeed he was right not to do so, for Alexandra Stepanovna soon afterwards eloped with a lieutenant of a cavalry regiment, goodness knows which, and hastily married him in some village church, knowing that her father disliked officers, and had a strange conviction that they were all gamblers and spendthrifts. Her father sent his curse after her and did not trouble to pursue her. The house became still emptier. Miserliness began to be a more conspicuous characteristic of the master, and developed more rapidly as his rough hair was silvered, for white hair is always the trusty ally of avarice. The French tutor was dismissed, as the time came for the son to enter the service. The governess was turned away, as it appeared she had not been quite exemplary in regard to Alexandra Stepanovna's elopement. The son, who had been sent to the chief town of the province to go into the department of justice, which in his father's opinion was a sound branch of the service, obtained a commission in a regiment instead, and, only after receiving it, wrote to his father for money for his equipment ; but naturally all he got was a rebuff. At last the

second daughter, who had remained with him at home, died, and the old man found himself the sole keeper, guardian and master of his riches. His solitary life furnished ample food for his avarice to batten upon, for that vice, as we all know, has the appetite of a wolf and grows more insatiable the more it devours. The human feelings, which had never been very deep in him, grew shallower every hour, and every day something more dropped away from the decrepit wreck. As though expressly to confirm his prejudices against the military, it happened at this time that his son lost money at cards; he sent him a paternal curse that came from the heart, and never troubled himself afterwards to ascertain whether he was alive or dead. Every year more windows were boarded up in the house; at last only two were left, and one of these, as the reader has seen already, was pasted up with paper; every year the important part of the management passed more out of his sight; his petty anxieties were more and more concentrated on the scraps of paper and feathers he picked up in his room. He became more and more uncompromising with the dealers who used to come to purchase his produce; they haggled and haggled and at last threw him up altogether, saying that he was a devil, not a man. The hay and the corn rotted, the stores and stacks decayed into manure only of use for growing cabbages: the flour in the cellars got hard as a stone, and had to be chopped with an axe. It was risky to handle the cloth,

linen and home-made materials, for they turned to dust at the touch. By now he had himself forgotten how much he had of anything and only remembered the place in the cupboard where he had put a decanter with a little of some liqueur in it, and the mark he had made on it, that no one might thievishly help himself, and the spot where a bit of sealing-wax or a feather had been laid. And meanwhile the revenue from the estate came in as before: the peasants had to pay the same rent in lieu of labour, every peasant woman had to bring the same contribution of nuts, and to furnish so many pieces of the linen she weaved. All this was heaped together in the storehouses, and all was falling into decay and tatters, and he himself was at last turning into a mere tatter of humanity. Alexandra Stepanovna came on one or two occasions to visit him with her little son, in hope of getting a little help from him; evidently a life on active service with the lieutenant was not as attractive as she had fancied before her marriage. Plyushkin forgave her, however, and even gave his little grandson a button that was lying on the table to play with, but he gave her no money. Another time Alexandra Stepanovna came with two little ones and brought him a cake for tea and a new dressing-gown, for her father was wearing a dressing-gown which was not merely a shocking but positively a shameful sight. Plyushkin fondled both his grandsons and, putting one on his right knee and one on his left, jogged them

up and down precisely as though they were on horseback. He accepted the cake and the dressing-gown, but gave his daughter absolutely nothing; and with that Alexandra Stepanovna departed.

And so this was the landowner that stood facing Tchitchikov! It must be said that such a phenomenon is rare in Russia, where every one prefers rather to expand than to contract, and it was the more striking because close by, in the same neighbourhood, there was a landowner who was spending his money right and left with all the devil-may-care recklessness of the old Russian serf-owner, burning his way through life, as the saying is. The passing stranger stopped in amazement at the sight of his dwelling, wondering what sovereign prince had suddenly appeared in the midst of the petty, obscure landowners: the white house with its innumerable chimneys, belvederes and turrets, surrounded by a crowd of lodges and all sorts of buildings for visitors, looked like a palace. Nothing was lacking. There were theatres, balls; every night the garden was brilliantly decorated with lights and lamps, and resounded to the strains of music. Half the province gaily promenaded under the trees, dressed up in their best, and no one felt it strange and sinister when out of the dark shade of the trees a branch stood out theatrically in the artificial light, robbed of its bright green, and the night sky looked darker and more gloomy and twenty times more terrible through it, and the austere tree-tops with their leaves quivering

in the heights as they vanished into the impenetrable darkness seemed to resent the tawdry brilliance that lighted up their roots below.

Plyushkin had been standing for some minutes without uttering a word, and still Tchitchikov, distracted both by the appearance of the landowner himself and by all that was in his room, could not think how to begin the conversation. For a long while he could not imagine in what words to explain the object of his visit. He had intended to use some such expression as 'that having heard of his virtues and the rare qualities of his soul, he had thought it his duty to pay him his respects in person'; but he hesitated and felt that this was too much. Casting another side-long look at all the things in the room, he felt that the words 'virtues' or 'rare qualities of soul,' might be suitably replaced by the words 'economy' and 'good management,' and so, adapting his speech accordingly, he said, that, having heard of his economy and rare skill in the management of his estates, he had thought it his duty to make his acquaintance and pay his respects in person. No doubt a better reason might have been found, but nothing else occurred to him at the moment.

To this Plyushkin muttered something between his lips,—he had no teeth,—what it was exactly is not certain, but probably the gist of it was: 'The deuce take you and your respects'; but, as hospitality is so traditional a duty among us that even a miser cannot bring himself to trans-

gress its laws, he added a little more distinctly: 'Pray sit down!'

'It's a long time since I have seen visitors,' he said, 'and I must own I don't see much use in them. A most unseemly habit of visiting one another has come into fashion, and it means neglecting one's work . . . and one has to give hay to their horses too! I had my dinner hours ago, my kitchen is humble and in a very bad state, and the chimney is completely in ruins: if one were to begin to heat the stove, one would set fire to the place.'

'So that's how the land lies!' thought Tchitchikov to himself. 'It's a good thing I did eat a cheese-cake and a good slice of saddle of mutton at Sobakevitch's.'

'And what is so tiresome is that there is not a bundle of hay on the whole estate!' Plyushkin went on. 'And indeed how is one to have any? I have a wretched little bit of land and the peasants are lazy, they are not fond of work, they are always trying to get off to the tavern. . . . If I don't look out, I shall be begging my bread in my old age!'

'I have been told, however,' said Tchitchikov modestly, 'that you have more than a thousand serfs.'

'And who told you that? You ought to have spat in his face when he said that, my good sir. It seems he was jeering, he wanted to have a joke with you. Here they chatter about a thousand serfs, but you should just go and count them,

and you 'll find nothing of the sort ! During the last three years, the cursed fever has carried off a terrible number of my peasants.'

' You don't say so ! And have many died ? ' exclaimed Tchitchikov with sympathy.

' Yes, many are in their graves.'

' And allow me to ask you, how many ? '

' Eighty souls.'

' No ? '

' I shouldn't tell you a lie, my good sir.'

' Allow me to inquire too : I suppose that you reckon that number from the time the last census was taken ? '

' I should be thankful if it were so,' said Plyushkin, ' the number dead since then runs up to a hundred and twenty.'

' Really ! a hundred and twenty ? ' exclaimed Tchitchikov, and he positively gaped with astonishment.

' I am an old man, sir, and not likely to tell you a lie : I am over seventy ! ' said Plyushkin. He seemed rather offended by Tchitchikov's almost joyful exclamation. Tchitchikov realised that such lack of sympathy with another man's troubles really was shocking, and so he immediately sighed and said that he deeply sympathised.

' But sympathy is nothing you can put in your pocket,' said Plyushkin. ' Here there is a captain living near, the devil knows where he has come from ; he says he is a relation. It's " uncle, uncle," all the time, and he kisses my hand ; and when he begins sympathising he sets up such a howl

that one wants to stuff one's fingers in one's ears. He is all red in the face; he's too fond of good brandy, I'll be bound. No doubt he wasted his money, being an officer, or some stage actress turned his head, so now he has to sympathise!

Tchitchikov tried to explain that his sympathy was not of the same sort as the captain's, and that he was ready to prove it, not in hollow words, but in action, and, coming straight to business, he announced his readiness to take upon himself the duty of paying the tax for all the peasants who had died in this unfortunate way. The offer seemed to astound Plyushkin. He stared at him with wide-open eyes and finally asked: 'Why, have you been in military service, sir?'

'No,' said Tchitchikov rather slyly, 'I was in the civil service.'

'In the civil service,' said Plyushkin, and he began munching his lips, as though he were eating something. 'But how do you mean? Why, it will be a loss to you?'

'To please you, I am ready to face the loss.'

'Ah, my good sir! ah, my benefactor!' cried Plyushkin, not observing in his delight that a piece of snuff of the colour of coffee grounds was peeping out of his nose in a most unpicturesque way, and that the skirts of his dressing-gown had flown apart and were displaying under-garments not at all suitable for exhibition. 'You are bringing comfort to an old man! Oh Lord! Oh holy saints! . . .' Plyushkin could say no more. But before a minute had passed, the joy

that had appeared so instantaneously on his wooden face just as instantaneously passed away, as though it had never been there, and the anxious expression came into his face again. He even wiped his face with his handkerchief and, rolling it up into a ball, began to pass it over his upper lip.

‘How do you mean, if I may make bold to inquire without offending you; do you undertake to pay the tax for them every year, and will send the money to me or to the tax collector?’

‘Oh, this is what we will do: we will draw up a deed of purchase of them, as though they were alive, and as though you were selling them to me.’

‘Yes, a deed of purchase,’ said Plyushkin; he sank into thought and began again munching his lips. ‘But you see a deed of purchase is an expense. The clerks have no conscience. In old days one could get off with half a rouble in copper and a sack of flour, but now you have to send them a whole cartload of grain, and add a red note too, they are such money-grubbers. I don’t know how it is no one notices it. They might at least say a word of admonition to them; you know you can touch any one with a word, say what you like, but there is no resisting a word of admonition.’

‘Come, I fancy you would resist it!’ Tchitchikov thought to himself, and he at once declared that out of respect for him he was even ready to take the expenses of the purchase upon himself.

Hearing that he was prepared to do this, Plyushkin

concluded that his visitor must be a perfect fool, was only pretending to have been in the civil service, and had probably been an officer and dangled after actresses. For all that he could not conceal his delight and called down all sorts of blessings, not only upon him but upon his children, without inquiring whether he had any or not. Going to the window he tapped on the pane and shouted: 'Hey, Proshka!' A minute later there was the sound of some one running in hot haste into the hall, moving about there for a long time and tramping with his boots. At last the door opened and Proshka, a boy of thirteen, walked in, wearing boots so huge that they almost flew off his feet at every step. Why Proshka had such big boots the reader may be told at once. Plyushkin kept for the use of all his house-serfs, however many they might be, only one pair of boots, which had always to be kept in the hall. Every one summoned to the master's apartments used as a rule to prance barefoot across the yard, to put on the boots on entering the hall and so to appear at the master's door. When he went out, he left his boots in the hall and set off again on his own soles. If any one had glanced out of window in the autumn, especially when the frosts were beginning, he would have seen all the house-serfs cutting such capers as the most agile dancer scarcely succeeds in executing at the theatre.

'Just look, my good sir, what a loutish face,' Plyushkin said to Tchitchikov, pointing to

Proshka's. 'He is as stupid as a block of wood, but try putting anything down, he'll steal it in a minute! Well, what have you come for, fool, tell me what?' Here he paused for a space, and Proshka responded with equal silence.

'Set the samovar, do you hear—and here, take the key and give it to Mavra for her to go to the storeroom: on the shelf there is a piece of the cake Alexandra Stepanovna brought, it can be served for tea. . . . Stay, where are you off to, stupid fool, tut, tut, stupid fool. . . . Is the devil tickling your feet or what? . . . You should listen first. The cake may be a little mouldy on the top, so let her scrape it with a knife, but don't throw away the crumbs; take them to the hens, and mind now, you are not to go into the storeroom, my boy; if you do—I'll give it you with a birch, you know, to give you an appetite! You've a fine appetite as it is, so that would improve it! You just try to go into the storeroom! I shall be looking out of window all the time. . . . You can't trust them with anything,' he went on, addressing Tchitchikov, after Proshka had taken himself off with his boots. Then he began looking suspiciously at Tchitchikov, too. Such extraordinary generosity struck him as incredible, and he thought to himself:

'The devil only knows what he is up to; maybe he is only boasting, like all these spendthrifts. He goes on lying and lying, just to talk, and get a drink of tea, and then he will go off!'

And therefore as a precaution and at the same

time wishing to test him a little, he said that it would not be amiss to complete the purchase as quickly as possible, since there was no reckoning on anything in human affairs: one is alive to-day but to-morrow is in God's hands.

Tchitchikov expressed his readiness to complete the purchase that very minute, and asked for nothing but a list of all the peasants.

This reassured Plyushkin. It could be seen that he was considering doing something, and taking his keys he did in fact approach the cupboard and opening the door, rummaged for a long time among the glasses and cups, and at last articulated: 'Why, there is no finding it, but I did have a drop of splendid liqueur, if only they have not drunk it up, they are such a set of thieves! Oh, isn't this it, perhaps!'

Tchitchikov saw in his hands a little decanter which was enveloped in dust as though in a vest.

'My wife made it herself,' Plyushkin went on. 'The slut of a housekeeper was for flinging it away altogether and did not even keep it corked, the wretch! Ladybirds and all sorts of rubbish had got into it, but I took all that out and now it's quite clean, and I will give you a glass.'

But Tchitchikov tried to refuse the liqueur, saying that he had already eaten and drunk.

'Eaten and drunk already!' said Plyushkin. 'To be sure, one can recognise a man of good society anywhere; he does not eat but has had all he wants; but when one of these impostors comes you have to feed him endlessly. . . . That

captain turns up: "Uncle," he says, "give me something to eat," and I am no more his uncle than he is my grandfather; he has nothing to eat at home I expect, so he comes dangling round here! So you want a list of all these wastrels? To be sure, I know I made a list of them on a special bit of paper, so that they might be all struck off at the next revision of the census.'

Plyushkin put on his spectacles and began fumbling among his papers. Untying all sorts of papers he regaled his visitor with so much dust that the latter sneezed. At last he pulled out a bit of paper covered closely with writing. It was covered as thickly with peasants' names as a leaf with green fly. There were some of all sorts: Paramons and Pimens and Panteleymons, and there was even one Grigory Never-get-there. There were over a hundred and twenty in all. 'Tchitchikov smiled at the sight of so many. Putting it into his pocket he observed to Plyushkin that he would have to go to the town to complete the purchase.

'To the town? But how can I? . . . And how can I leave the house? Why, my serfs are all thieves or scoundrels: in one day they would strip me, so I'd have nothing left to hang my coat on.'

'Haven't you some one of your acquaintance?'

'Some one of my acquaintance? All my acquaintances are dead or have dropped my acquaintance. . . . Ah, my good sir, to be sure I have!' he cried. 'Why, the president himself is a friend of mine, he used to come and see me

in old days. I should think I do know him! We were boys together, we used to climb the fences together. Not know him? I should think I do! . . . Shouldn't I write to him?'

'Why, of course, write to him!'

'To be sure, he is a friend! We used to be friends at school.'

And, all at once, something like a ray of warmth glided over that wooden face, there was an expression not of feeling, but of a sort of pale reflection of feeling.

It was an apparition, like the sudden appearance of a drowned man at the surface of the water, that calls forth a shout of joy in the crowd upon the bank; but in vain the rejoicing brothers and sisters let down a cord from the bank and wait for another glimpse of the back or the arms exhausted with struggling—that appearance was the last. All is still, and the unrippled surface of the implacable element is still more terrible and desolate than before. So the face of Plyushkin, after the feeling that glided for an instant over it, looked harder and meaner than ever.

'There was a sheet of clean paper lying here on the table,' he said, 'but I don't know what could have become of it, my servants are so untrustworthy!' Thereupon he began looking on the table and under the table and fumbled everywhere, and at last shouted: 'Mavra, Mavra!' His summons was answered by a woman with a plate in her hand on which lay the piece of dry cake of which the reader has heard already. And

the following conversation took place between them.

‘Where did you put that paper, you wretch of a woman?’

‘Upon my word, your honour, I have not seen any except the little bit you were pleased to give me to cover the wine-glass.’

‘But I see from your face that you filched it.’

‘What should I filch it for? I should have no use for it: I can’t read or write.’

‘That’s a lie, you took it to the sacristan! he knows his A B C, so you took it to him.’

‘Why, the sacristan can get paper for himself if he wants it. He’s not seen your bit of paper!’

‘You wait a bit. At the dread Day of Judgment, the devils will toast you on their iron forks for this. You will see how they will toast you!’

‘Why should they toast me, when I have never touched the paper? Other womanish weaknesses maybe, but thieving nobody has ever charged me with before.’

‘But the devils will toast you! They will say: “Here, this is for deceiving your master, you wicked woman,” and they’ll roast you on hot coals!’

‘And I shall say: “There’s no reason to! upon my word, there’s no reason! I didn’t take it. . . .” But there it lies yonder on the table; you are always scolding me for nothing!’

Plyushkin did, indeed, see the paper; he stood still for a minute chewing his lips, and then brought out: ‘Well, why are you running on

like that? You are such a stuck-up thing! If one says a word to her, she answers back a dozen. Go and bring a light for me to seal a letter. Stay! You will snatch up a tallow candle; tallow is so soft; it burns away to nothing, it's a waste; you bring me a burning stick!'

Mavra went out and Plyushkin, sitting down in an armchair and taking up a pen, turned the paper over and over in his hand, wondering whether he could not tear a scrap off it, but, coming to the conclusion at last that he could not, he dipped the pen into an inkstand containing some sort of mildewy liquid with a number of flies at the bottom, and began writing, forming the letters like musical notes, and continually checking the impetuosity of his hand, and preventing it from galloping too freely over the paper, fitting each line close up to the next and thinking, not without regret, that in spite of his efforts a lot of blank space would be wasted.

And could a man sink to such triviality, such meanness, such nastiness? Could he change so much? And is it true to life? Yes, it is all true to life. All this can happen to a man. The ardent youth of to-day would start back in horror if you could show him his portrait in old age. As you pass from the soft years of youth into harsh, hardening manhood, be sure you take with you on the way all the humane emotions, do not leave them on the road: you will not pick them up again afterwards! Old age is before you, threatening and terrible, and it will give you

nothing back again ! The grave is more merciful ; on the tomb is written : ' Here lies a man,' but you can read nothing on the frigid, callous features of old age.

' And do you know any one among your friends,' said Plyushkin as he folded up the letter, ' who is in want of runaway souls ? '

' Why, have you runaway ones too ? ' asked Tchitchikov, quickly pricking up his ears.

' That's just it, I have. My brother-in-law did make inquiries : but he says there is no trace to be found of them ; of course, he is a military man, he can clank his spurs well enough, but as for legal business . . . '

' And what number may there be of them ? '

' Why, there are seventy of those too.'

' No, really ? '

' Yes indeed ! Not a year passes without some running away. They are a shockingly greedy lot, from idleness they have taken to drinking, while I have nothing to eat myself. . . . Really I would take anything I could get for them. So you might advise your friend : if he can only find one in ten, it will be all profit. You know a serf is worth fifty roubles.'

' No, I am not going to let any friend have an inkling of it,' thought Tchitchikov to himself : and then he explained that such a friend could not be found, since the expenses of the business would cost more than that, seeing that one had better cut off the skirts of one's coat than not get away from the courts, but if he really was so

pressed for money, then he was ready out of sympathy to give . . . but really it was a trifle scarcely worth discussing.

‘Why, how much would you give?’ asked Plyushkin, and he ‘went Jewish’; his hands quivered like quicksilver.

‘I’d give you twenty-five kopecks the soul.’

‘And how would you buy them—for ready money?’

‘Yes, money down.’

‘Only, my good sir, considering my great need, you might give me forty kopecks apiece.’

‘My honoured friend,’ said Tchitchikov, ‘I should be glad to pay you not forty kopecks, but five hundred roubles each! I would pay it with pleasure, for I see a good, worthy old man suffering through his own kindness of heart.’

‘Yes indeed, that’s true! It’s really the truth!’ said Plyushkin, hanging his head and shaking it regretfully. ‘It’s all through kindness of heart.’

‘There, you see I grasped your character at once. And so I should be glad to give five hundred roubles, but . . . I have not the means. I am ready to add five kopecks so that the souls would be thirty apiece.’

‘Well, my good sir, as you will, but you might raise it two kopecks.’

‘I will raise it another two kopecks, certainly. How many of them have you? I believe you said seventy.’

‘No, altogether there are seventy-eight.’

‘Seventy-eight, seventy-eight at thirty-two kopecks each, that makes . . .’ At this point our hero thought for one second, not more. ‘That makes twenty-four roubles, ninety-six kopecks! . . .’ He was good at arithmetic. He immediately made Plyushkin write out a list of the serfs and paid him the money, which the latter took in both hands and carried to his bureau with as much care as though he were carrying some liquid and was in fear every minute of spilling it. On reaching the bureau he looked over the money once more, and with the same care put it in a drawer, where it no doubt was destined to be buried, till such time as Father Karp and Father Polikarp, the two priests of his village, came to bury him himself, to the indescribable joy of his son-in-law and his daughter, and possibly of the captain who claimed relationship with him. After putting away the money, Plyushkin sat down in his armchair, and seemed unable to find a subject for further conversation.

‘Why, are you going already,’ he said, noticing a slight movement on the part of Tchitchikov, who was however only intending to get out his handkerchief.

This question reminded him that he really had no reason for lingering. ‘Yes, I must be off,’ he said, taking his hat.

‘And what about tea?’

‘No, I must have a cup of tea with you next time I come.’

‘Why, I ordered the samovar; I must own I am not very fond of tea myself: it is an expensive drink and the price of sugar has gone up cruelly. Proshka, we don’t need the samovar! Take the cake back to Mavra, do you hear? Let her put it back in the same place; no, I will put it back myself. Good-bye, my good sir, and God bless you. And you will give my letter to the president. Yes! Let him read it, he is an old friend of mine. Why, we were boys together!’

Whereupon this strange apparition, this miserable, shrunken old man accompanied him to the gate, after which he ordered the gate to be locked up at once; then he made the round of his storehouses to see whether all the watchmen who were stationed at every corner and had to tap with wooden spades on empty barrels, instead of on a sheet of iron, were in their proper places; after that, he peeped into the kitchen where, on the pretext of ascertaining whether the servants were being properly fed, he had a good feed of cabbage soup and boiled grain, and after abusing every one of them for stealing and bad behaviour, he returned to his room. When he was again alone, he began actually thinking how he could show his gratitude to his guest for his unexampled generosity. ‘I will give him a watch,’ he thought to himself; ‘it’s a good silver watch, and not one of your pinch-beck or bronze ones; something has gone wrong with it, but he can have it done up; he is still a young man, so he wants a watch to please his young lady. No,’ he added, after some reflec-

tion, 'I had better leave it him in my will that he may remember me.'

But, even without the watch, our hero was in the best of spirits. Such an unexpected haul was a real godsend. And actually, after all, not only dead souls, but runaway ones too, altogether more than two hundred! To be sure, even on his way to Plyushkin's he had had a presentiment that he would get something good, but such a profitable bargain he had never expected. He was exceptionally cheerful all the way, he whistled, played a tune with his fingers, put his fist to his mouth like a trumpet, and at last broke into a song so extraordinary that Selifan listened and listened, and then shaking his head a little, said: 'I say, if the master isn't singing!' It was quite dusk as they drove into the town. Light was merging into darkness and the very objects merged into indistinct blurs, too. The parti-coloured flag-staff was of an indefinite tint; the moustache of the soldier standing on sentry duty seemed to be on his forehead and a long way above his eyes, while his nose had disappeared entirely. The rattle and jolting made it evident that the chaise was rumbling over the cobble-stones. The street lamps were not yet lighted, but, here and there, the windows of the houses began lighting up, and, in the alleys and at the street corners, snatches of talk were audible such as are inseparable from that hour of the day in all towns where there are many soldiers, cabmen, workmen and peculiar creatures in the shape of ladies in red

shawls and in slippers with no stockings, who flit about like bats at the street corners. Tchitchikov did not notice them and did not even observe many genteel government clerks with little canes, who were probably returning home from a walk. From time to time exclamations, sounds of feminine voices, reached his ears: 'That's a lie, you drunken sot, I never let him take such a liberty!' or, 'Don't fight, you low fellow, but go along to the police-station; I'll show you!' words, in fact, such as fall like scalding water on the ears of a dreamy youth of twenty, when returning from the theatre with his head full of a street in Spain, a summer night and an exquisite feminine figure with curls and a guitar. What fancies are not floating in his brain? He is in the clouds, or off on a visit to Schiller, when suddenly the fatal words burst upon him like thunder: and he sees that he is back on earth, and even in the hay market and near a pot-house, and life in its workaday garb flaunts itself before him again.

At last the chaise with a violent jolt seemed to drop into a hole, as it passed in at the gates of the hotel, and Tchitchikov was met by Petrushka, who with one hand held the skirts of his coat, for he could not bear them to fly apart, and with the other began helping his master out of the chaise. The waiter ran out too with a candle in his hand and a napkin over his shoulder. Whether Petrushka was pleased at his master's arrival no one can tell; anyway, Selifan and he

winked at each other, and his usually sullen countenance seemed for a moment to brighten.

‘Your honour has been away a long time,’ said the waiter, as he held the candle to light up the stairs.

‘Yes,’ said Tchitchikov, as he mounted the stairs. ‘And how have you been getting on?’

‘Very well, thank God,’ answered the waiter, bowing. ‘A lieutenant, a military gentleman of some sort, arrived yesterday and has number sixteen.’

‘A lieutenant?’

‘I don’t know who he is, from Ryazan, bay horses.’

‘Very well, very well, behave well for the future too,’ said Tchitchikov, and he went into his room. As he went through the outer room he puckered up his nose and said to Petrushka, ‘You might at least have opened the windows!’

‘I did open them,’ said Petrushka, but he was lying. And his master knew he was lying, but he did not care to contest it.

He felt greatly fatigued after his expedition. Ordering the very lightest of suppers, consisting of sucking-pig, he undressed immediately after it, and getting under the bedclothes, fell into a sound sleep, fell into that sweet sleep which is the privilege of those happy mortals who know nothing of piles or fleas, or of over-developed intellectual faculties.

CHAPTER VII

HAPPY is the traveller who, after a long and wearisome journey with its cold and sleet, mud, posting-station superintendents waked out of their sleep, jingling bells, repairs, disputes, drivers, blacksmiths and all sorts of rascals of the road, sees at last the familiar roof with its lights flying to meet him. And there rise before his mind the familiar rooms, the delighted outcry of the servants running out to meet him, the noise and racing footsteps of his children, and the soothing gentle words interspersed with passionate kisses that are able to efface everything gloomy from the memory. Happy the man with a family and nook of his own, but woe to the bachelor!

Happy the writer who, passing by tedious and repulsive characters that impress us by their painful reality, attaches himself to characters that display the loftiest virtues of humanity, who, from the great whirlpool of human figures flitting by him daily, has selected only the few exceptions, who has never tuned his lyre to a less exalted key, has never stooped from his pinnacle to his poor, insignificant fellow-creatures, but without touching the earth has devoted himself entirely to his elevated images that are utterly remote from it. His fair portion is doubly worthy of envy; he lives in the midst of them

as in the midst of his own family; and, at the same time, his fame resounds far and wide. He clouds men's vision with enchanting incense; he flatters them marvellously, covering up the gloomy side of life, and exhibiting to them the noble man. All run after him, clapping their hands and eagerly following his triumphal chariot. They call him a great world-famed poet, soaring high above every other genius as the eagle soars above the other birds of the air. Young ardent hearts are thrilled at his very name; responsive tears gleam in every eye. . . . No one is his equal in power—he is a god! But quite other is the portion, and very different is the destiny of the writer who has the temerity to bring to the surface what is ever before men's sight and is unseen by their indifferent eyes—all the terrible overwhelming mire of trivialities in which our life is entangled, all that is hidden in the often cold, petty everyday characters with which our bitter and dreary path through life swarms, and with the strong hand of a relentless sculptor dares to present them bold and distinct to the gaze of all! It is not for him to receive the applause of the people, it is not his lot to behold the grateful tears and single-hearted rapture of souls stirred by his words; no girl of sixteen, with her head turned, flies to meet him with heroic enthusiasm. It is not his lot to lose himself in the sweet enchantment of sounds he has himself evoked. And lastly, it is not his lot to escape the contemporary critic, the hypocritical

callous contemporary critic, who will call his cherished creations mean and insignificant, will assign him an ignoble place in the ranks of writers who have insulted humanity, will attribute to him the qualities of his heroes, will strip him of heart and soul and the divine fire of talent. For the contemporary critic does not recognise that the telescope through which we behold the sun and the microscope which unfolds to us the movements of unnoticed insects are equally marvellous. For the contemporary critic does not recognise that great spiritual depth is needed to light up a picture of ignoble life and transform it into a gem of creative art. For the contemporary critic does not admit that the laughter of lofty delight is worthy to stand beside exalted lyrical emotion, and that there is all the world of difference between it and the antics of clowns at a fair! All this the critic of to-day does not admit, and he will turn it all into the censure and dishonour of the unrecognised writer. Without sympathy, without response, without compassion, he is left by the roadside like the traveller without a family. Hard is his lot and bitterly he feels his loneliness.

And for long years to come I am destined by some strange fate to walk hand in hand with my odd heroes, to gaze at life in its vast movement, to gaze upon it through laughter seen by the world and tears unseen and unknown by it! And far away still is the time when the terrible storm of inspiration will burst into another

stream, and my head be wreathed with holy terror and brilliance, and men will hear with a confused tremor the majestic thunder of other words. . . .

But forward ! forward ! Away with the wrinkles that furrow the brow, away with stern and gloomy looks ! Let us plunge at once into life with all its silent clamour and jingling bells, and let us see what Tchitchikov is doing.

Tchitchikov woke up, stretched his arms and legs and felt that he had had a good sleep. After lying for two minutes on his back, he snapped his fingers, and with a beaming face remembered that he had now almost four hundred souls. He jumped out of bed on the spot and did not even look at his face, of which he was very fond, finding, so it appears, the chin extremely attractive, for he very often praised it to some one of his friends, especially if one happened to be present while he was shaving. 'Just look,' he would say, stroking it with his hand, 'what a chin I have : perfectly round.' On this occasion, however, he looked neither at his chin nor at his face, but, just as he was, put on his dressing-gown and his morocco boots with decorated tops of many colours (the sort of boots in which the town of Torzhok does a brisk trade, thanks to the Russians' love of comfort), and forgetting his dignity and his decorous middle age, he pranced like a Scotchman, in nothing but his shirt, right across the room in two skips, very neatly striking himself on the back with his heels. Then he instantly

set to work. Rubbing his hands before his box with as much pleasure as an incorruptible district judge displays on going into lunch, he at once drew out some papers from it. He wanted to conclude the whole business as quickly as possible without putting it off. He made up his mind to draw up the deed of purchase himself, to write it out and copy it, to avoid the expense of lawyers' clerks. He was quite familiar with legal formalities: he put at the top, in bold figures, the date, then after it in small letters, So-and-so, landowner, and everything as it should be. In a couple of hours it was all done. When afterwards he glanced at the lists, at the peasants who really had once been peasants, had worked, ploughed, got drunk, been drivers, cheated their masters, or perhaps were simply good peasants, a strange feeling which he could not himself comprehend, took possession of him. Each list had as it were an individual character, and through it the peasants themselves seemed to have an individual character, too. The peasants belonging to Madame Korobotchka almost all had nicknames and descriptions. Plyushkin's list was distinguished by the brevity of its style: often only the initial letters of the name were given. Sobakevitch's catalogue was distinguished by its extraordinary fullness and circumstantial detail; not one characteristic of the peasants was omitted: of one it was stated that he was 'a good cabinet-maker,' of another it was noted that 'he understands his work and does not touch liquor.' As

circumstantially were entered the names of their fathers and mothers, and how they had behaved : of one only, a certain Fedotov, it was stated : ‘ father unknown ; he was the son of the peasant girl Kapitolina, but he was of good character and not a thief.’ All these details gave a peculiar air of freshness : it seemed as though the peasants had been alive only yesterday. After gazing a long time at their names, his heart was stirred and with a sigh he brought out ‘ Goodness, what a lot there are of you crowded in here ! What did you do in your day, my dear souls ? How did you all get along ?’ And his eyes unconsciously rested on one name. It was Pyotr Savelyev (Never mind the Trough), of whom the reader has heard already, and who once belonged to Madame Korobotchka. Again he could not refrain from saying : ‘ What a long name, it has spread all over the line. Were you a craftsman or simply a peasant, and what death carried you off ? Was it at the pot-house or did a clumsy wagon run over you when you were asleep in the middle of the road ? “ Stepan Probka, carpenter, of exemplary sobriety.” Ah, here he is, here is Stepan Probka, that giant who ought to have been in the Guards ! He went about all the provinces with an axe in his belt and his boots slung over his shoulder, eating a hap’orth of bread and a couple of dried fish, though I bet he carried home a hundred silver roubles in his purse every time, or perhaps sewed up a note in his hempen breeches, or thrust it

in his boot. Where did you meet your death? Did you clamber up to the church cupola to earn a big fee, or perhaps you even dragged yourself up to the cross, and slipping down from a crossbeam, fell with a thud on the ground and some Uncle Mihey, standing by, simply scratched his head and said: "Ech, Vanya, you have done the trick this time!" and tying himself to the cord climbed up to take your place. "Maxim Telyatnikov, bootmaker." Hey, a bootmaker! As drunk as a cobbler, says the proverb. I know you, I know you, my dear fellow; I can tell you your whole story if you like. You were apprenticed to a German who used to feed all of you together, beat you on the back with a strap for carelessness, and wouldn't let you out into the streets to lark about, and you were a marvel, not an ordinary bootmaker; and the German couldn't say enough in your praise when he talked with his wife or his comrade. And when your apprenticeship was over: "I'll set up on my own account now!" you said, "and I won't make a farthing profit at a time like the German, I'll get rich at once." And so, sending your master a good sum in lieu of labour, you set up a little shop, took a number of orders and went to work. You got hold of cheap bits of rotten leather and made twice their value on every pair of boots, and within a week or two your boots split and you were abused in the coarsest way. And your shop began to be deserted and you took to drinking and loafing about the streets, saying: "This life's a poor look-out. There is

no living for a Russian, the Germans always stand in our way!" What peasant is this? Elizaveta Vorobey? Ough, you plague, you are a woman! How did she get in here? That scoundrel Sobakevitch has done me again!

Tchitchikov was right, it really was a woman. How she got there there was no knowing, but she had been so skilfully introduced, that at a distance she might have been taken for a man, and the name in fact ended in *t* instead of *a*, not Elizaveta but Elizavet. However, he paid no attention to that but crossed it out at once. 'Grigory Never-get-there! What sort of a fellow were you? Were you a carrier by trade, did you get a team of three horses and a cart with a cover of sacking, and renounce your home for ever, your native lair, and go trailing off with merchants to the fairs? And did you give up your soul to God on the road, or did your companions do for you on account of some fat red-cheeked soldier's wife, or did some tramp in the forest cast a covetous eye on your leather gloves and your three short-legged but sturdy horses or, perhaps, lying on the rafter bed, you brooded and brooded, and for no rhyme or reason turned into the pot-house, and then straight to a hole in the ice, and vanished for ever! Ah, the Russian people! They don't care to die a natural death! And what about you, my darlings!' he went on, casting his eyes on the page on which Plyushkin's runaway serfs were inscribed: 'though you are alive, what is the good of you? You might as well be dead. And where are your nimble legs

carrying you now? Did you have a bad time with Plyushkin, or is it simply to please yourselves that you are wandering in the forest and robbing travellers? Are you in prison or have you found other masters and are tilling the land? Yeremy Karyakin, Nikita Flitter and his son, Anton Flitter. One can see by their very names that they were nimble-footed gentry. Popov, a house-serf. . . . He must have been able to read and write: I bet he never took a knife in his hand, but did his thieving in a gentlemanly way. But then a police-captain caught you without a passport. You stood your ground boldly when you were examined. "Whose man are you?" says the police-captain, flinging some strong language at you on this appropriate occasion. "Mr. So-an-so's," you answer smartly. "Why are you here?" says the police-captain. "Away on leave for a fixed payment," you answer without hesitation. "Where is your passport?" "My employer, Pimenov, has it." "Call Pimenov." "Are you Pimenov?" "I am Pimenov." "Did he give you his passport?" "No, he never gave me a passport." "Why are you lying?" says the police-captain, with the addition of some strong language. "Just so," you answer boldly, "I did not give it to him because I got home late, but gave it to Antip Prohorov, the bell-ringer, to take care of." "Call the bell-ringer. Did he give you his passport?" "No, I took no passport from him." "Why are you lying again?" says the police-captain, fortifying his words with more strong

language. "Where is your passport?" "I did have it," you answer promptly, "but maybe I dropped it on the road." "And why," asks the police-captain, again throwing in a little strong language, "have you carried off a soldier's overcoat and the priest's box with coppers in it?" "Never yet," you say, without turning a hair, "have I been mixed up in any sort of dishonesty." "Then how is it they found the overcoat in your possession?" "I can't say: somebody else must have brought it." "Ah, you brute, you brute," says the police-captain shaking his head, with his arms akimbo. "Rivet fetters on his legs and take him to prison." "By all means, I'll go with pleasure," you answer. And then, taking a snuff-box out of your pocket, you genially offer it to the two veterans who are putting on your fetters, and ask them how long they have left the army and what wars they were in. And then you settle down in prison till your case comes on for trial. And the judge orders that you are to be taken from Tsarevo-Kokshaisk prison to the prison of some other town, and from there the court sends you on to Vesyegonsk, and you move about from prison to prison, and say when you have inspected your new abode: "Well, the Vesyegonsk prison is smarter; there is room even for a game of skittles there, and there's more company."

'Abakum Fyrov! What about you, my boy? where are you wandering now? Have you drifted to the Volga, fallen in love with the free life and

joined the hauliers?' . . . At this point Tchitchikov stopped and sank into a daydream. What was he dreaming about? Was he dreaming of the lot of Abakum Fyrov, or was he simply dreaming on his own account as every Russian dreams, whatever may be his years, his rank, and condition, when he thinks of the reckless gaiety of a free life. And indeed, where is Fyrov now? He leads a gay and jolly life on the corn wharf, bargaining with the merchants. Flowers and ribbons on their hats, the whole gang of hauliers are merry, taking leave of their wives and mistresses, tall, well-made women in beads and ribbons; there are dances and songs; the whole place is surging with life, while to the sound of shouts and oaths and words of encouragement, the porters hooking some nine poods on their backs, pour peas and wheat rattling into the deep holds, pile up bags of oats and corn, and the heaps of sacks, piled up in a pyramid like cannon balls, are seen all over the quay, and the huge arsenal of grain towers up immense till it is all loaded into the deep holds, and, with the melting of the ice in spring, the endless fleet files away. Then you get to work, you hauliers! and all together, just as before you made merry, you set to, toiling and sweating, pulling at the strap, to the sound of a song as unending as Russia!

'Aha! Twelve o'clock!' said Tchitchikov, at last, looking at his watch. 'Why have I been dawdling like this? It wouldn't have been so bad, if I had been doing something, but, for no

rhyme or reason, at first I set to spinning yarns and then fell to dreaming. What a fool I am, really!' Saying this he changed his Scotch costume for a European one, drew tightly the buckle over his somewhat round stomach, sprinkled himself with eau-de-Cologne, picked up his warm cap, and with his papers under his arm, went off to the government offices to complete the deed of purchase. He made haste, not because he was afraid of being late—he was not afraid of being late, for he knew the president, and the latter could prolong or curtail the sitting to please himself, like Homer's Zeus, who lengthened the days or brought on night prematurely when he wanted to cut short the battle of his favourite heroes, or to give them an opportunity to fight to a finish—but he felt a desire to get the business over as quickly as possible; he felt uneasy and uncomfortable until it was done, he was haunted by the thought that the souls were not quite real, and that it was always as well to get a load of that sort off his back as quickly as possible. Reflecting on these things and at the same time pulling on his shoulders his bearskin overcoat, covered with brown cloth, he reached the street, and, instantly on turning into a side street, met another gentleman in a bearskin coat, covered with brown cloth and a warm cap with earflaps. The gentleman cried out—it was Manilov. They immediately folded each other in a mutual embrace, and remained clasped in each other's arms for five minutes in the street. Their kisses were so

ardent on both sides that their front teeth ached all the rest of the day. Manilov's delight was so great that only his nose and his lips remained in his face, his eyes completely disappeared. For a quarter of an hour he held Tchitchikov's hand clasped in both of his and made it terribly hot. In the most refined and agreeable phrases, he described how he had flown to embrace Pavel Ivanovitch; his speech wound up with a compliment only suitable for a young lady at a dance. Tchitchikov opened his mouth without knowing how to thank him, when Manilov took from under his fur coat a roll of paper tied up with pink ribbon.

‘What is that?’

‘The peasants.’

‘Ah!’ He immediately unfolded it, ran his eyes over it, and admired the neatness and beauty of the handwriting. ‘It's well written,’ he said, ‘there's no need to copy it. And a margin ruled all round it! Who made that margin so artistically?’

‘You mustn't ask,’ said Manilov.

‘You?’

‘My wife.’

‘Oh, dear, I am really ashamed to have given so much trouble.’

‘Nothing is a trouble for Pavel Ivanovitch!’

Tchitchikov bowed his acknowledgment. Learning that he was going to the government offices to complete the purchase, Manilov expressed his readiness to accompany him. The friends

took each the other's arm and walked on together. At the slightest rise in the ground, whether it was a hillock or a step, Manilov supported Tchitchikov and almost lifted him up, saying with an agreeable smile, as he did so, that he could not let Pavel Ivanovitch hurt his precious foot. Tchitchikov was abashed, not knowing how to thank him and conscious that he was no light weight. Paying each other these attentions they reached at last the square in which the government offices were to be found in a big three-storeyed brick house, painted white as chalk all over, probably as a symbol of the purity of heart of the various departments located in it. The other buildings in the square were out of keeping with the huge brick house. They were a sentry-box at which a soldier was standing with a gun, a cabstand, and lastly a long fence adorned with the inscriptions and sketches in charcoal and chalk usual on fences. There was nothing else in this desolate or, as the expression is among us, picturesque place. From the windows of the second and third storeys, the incorruptible heads of the votaries of Themis were thrust out and instantly disappeared again: probably their chief entered the room at the moment. The friends rather ran than walked up the stairs, for Tchitchikov, trying to avoid being supported by Manilov, quickened his pace, while Manilov dashed forward, trying to assist Tchitchikov, that he might not be tired, so both the friends were breathless when they reached the dark corridor at the top.

The eye was not impressed with the high degree of cleanliness either of the corridors or of the rooms. At that time they did not trouble about it, and what was dirty remained dirty, and no attempt was made at external charm. Themis received her visitors, just as she was, in negligée and dressing-gown. The offices through which our heroes passed ought to be described, but our author cherishes the deepest awe for all such places. If he has chanced to pass through them even when they were in their most brilliant and dignified aspect with polished floors and tables, he has tried to hasten through them as quickly as he could, with bowed head and eyes meekly cast down, and so he has not the slightest idea how flourishing and prosperous it all looked.

Our hero saw a vast amount of paper, rough drafts and fair copies, bent heads, thick necks, dress coats, frock coats of provincial cut, even a light grey jacket which stood out conspicuously among the others, and of which the wearer with his head on one side and almost touching the paper, was writing in a bold and flourishing hand a report on a successful lawsuit concerning misappropriation of land or the inventory of an estate, of which a peaceable country gentleman had taken possession, and on which he had spent his life, maintained himself, his children and his grandchildren while the lawsuit went on over his head: and brief phrases uttered in a husky voice were audible by snatches: 'Oblige me with case No. 368, Fedosey Fedoseyitch!' 'You always carry

off the cork of the office inkpot !’ From time to time a more majestic voice, doubtless that of one of the chiefs, rang out peremptorily : ‘ Copy it out again, or they shall take your boots away, and you shall stay here for six days and nights with nothing to eat.’ There was a great scratching of pens, which sounded like a cartful of brushwood driving through a copse a quarter of a yard deep in dead leaves.

Tchitchikov and Manilov went up to the first table, where two clerks of tender years were sitting, and inquired : ‘ Allow me to ask where is the business of deeds of sale transacted here ? ’

‘ Why, what do you want ? ’ asked both the clerks, turning round.

‘ I want to make an application.’

‘ Why, what have you bought ? ’

‘ I want first to know where is the table for matters relating to sales—here or in some other office ? ’

‘ Why, tell me first what you are buying, and at what price, and then we can tell you where ; but we can’t tell without.’

Tchitchikov saw at once that the clerks were inquisitive, like all young clerks, and trying to give more importance and consequence to their duties.

‘ Look here, gentlemen,’ he said, ‘ I know perfectly well that all business relating to the purchase of serfs, irrespective of the price paid, is transacted in the same office, and so I beg you to point out which is the table, and, if you don’t know

what is done in your office, we will ask some one else.' The clerks made no reply, one of them merely jerked his finger towards a corner of the room, where an old man was sitting at a table making notes on some official paper. Tchitchikov and Manilov passed between the tables and went straight up to him. The old man became deeply absorbed in his work.

'Allow me to ask,' said Tchitchikov with a bow, 'is this where I have to apply concerning deeds of sale?'

The old man raised his eyes and brought out deliberately: 'This is not the place to apply concerning deeds of sale.'

'Where then?'

'In the sales section.'

'And where is that section?'

'At Ivan Antonovitch's table.'

'And where is Ivan Antonovitch?'

The old man jerked his finger towards another corner of the room. Tchitchikov and Manilov made their way to Ivan Antonovitch. Ivan Antonovitch had already cast a glance behind him and stolen a sidelong look at them, but became instantly more deeply engrossed than ever in his writing.

'Allow me to ask,' said Tchitchikov with a bow, 'is this the right table to apply to concerning the sale of serfs?'

Ivan Antonovitch appeared not to hear the question and became absolutely buried in his papers, making no response whatever. It could

be seen at once that he was a man of reasonable years, very different from a young chatterbox and featherhead. Ivan Antonovitch seemed to be a man of over forty; his hair was thick and black; all the outline of his face stood out prominently, and ran out to meet his nose—in short it was the sort of face that is popularly called a ‘jug snout.’

‘Allow me to ask, is this the section for business relating to the purchase of serfs?’ said Tchitchikov.

‘Yes,’ said Ivan Antonovitch, turning his jug snout, but going on with his writing.

‘Well, this is the business I have come about; I have bought peasants from different landowners of this district; the deed of purchase is here, I have only to complete the formalities.’

‘And are the sellers here in person?’

‘Some are here, and from others I have an authorisation.’

‘And have you brought an application?’

‘I have the application too. I should be glad . . . I am obliged to be in haste . . . so would it be possible, for instance, to complete the business to-day?’

‘Oh, to-day! . . . It can’t be done to-day,’ said Ivan Antonovitch; ‘inquiries must be made, we must know whether there are any impediments.’

‘It may hasten matters, however, if I mention that Ivan Grigoryevitch, the president, is a great friend of mine. . . .’

‘But Ivan Grigoryevitch is not the only one,

you know; there are other people too,' Ivan Antonovitch said surlily.

Tchitchikov understood the hint Ivan Antonovitch had given him, and said: 'Other people will not be the worse for it either; I've been in the service, I understand business. . . .'

'Go to Ivan Grigoryevitch,' said Ivan Antonovitch in a somewhat more friendly voice. 'Let him give the order to the proper quarter, it is not in our hands.'

Tchitchikov took a note out of his pocket and put it before Ivan Antonovitch, who completely failed to notice it, and instantly put a book over it. Tchitchikov was about to point it out to him, but with a motion of his head Ivan Antonovitch gave him to understand that there was no need for him to point it out.

'Here, he'll show you to the office,' said Ivan Antonovitch, with a nod of his head, and one of the votaries standing near—he had sacrificed so zealously to Themis, that his sleeves were in holes at the elbows and the lining was sticking out, for which sacrifices he had been rewarded with the grade of collegiate registrar—performed for our friends the office that Virgil once performed for Dante, and brought them to an apartment in which there was one roomy armchair, and, in it, solitary as the sun, the president sat at a table behind a Double Eagle and two thick books. In this place the new Virgil was so overcome by awe that he did not venture to set foot within its portals, but turned round, displaying

his back worn as threadbare as a bit of matting, and with a hen's feather sticking on it. On entering the office, they saw that the president was not alone. With him was sitting Sobakevitch, completely screened by the Double Eagle. The entrance of the guests was greeted with an exclamation, the presidential chair was noisily pushed back. Sobakevitch, too, got up from his chair, and became visible from all sides, with his long sleeves. The president clasped Tchitchikov in his arms, and the room resounded with kisses; they inquired after each other's health; it appeared that both were suffering from pains in the back, which were at once set down to a sedentary life. The president seemed to have been already informed of the purchase by Sobakevitch, for he began congratulating our hero, which at first rather embarrassed the latter, especially when he saw Sobakevitch and Manilov, two vendors, with each of whom the business had been transacted in private, now standing face to face. He thanked the president, however, and addressing Sobakevitch, asked: 'And how are you?'

'Thank God, I have nothing to complain of,' said Sobakevitch. And certainly he had nothing to complain of. Iron might as soon catch cold and cough, as that marvellously constituted gentleman.

'Yes, you have always been famous for your health,' said the president. 'And your good father was just as strong.'

‘Yes, he used to tackle a bear alone,’ answered Sobakevitch.

‘I believe you could knock a bear down alone, too,’ said the president, ‘if you cared to tackle him.’

‘No, I couldn’t,’ said Sobakevitch, ‘my father was stronger than I am.’ And with a sigh, he went on: ‘No, people aren’t the same as they used to be; take my life, for instance, what can one say for it? It’s not up to much. . . .’

‘What’s wrong with your life?’ said the president.

‘It’s all wrong, it’s all wrong,’ said Sobakevitch, shaking his head. ‘Only think, Ivan Grigoryevitch: I am fifty and I have never been ill in my life; I might at least have had a sore throat or a boil or a carbuncle. . . . No, it will bring me no good. Some day I shall have to pay for it.’ Here Sobakevitch sank into melancholy.

‘What a fellow!’ Tchitchikov and the president thought simultaneously, ‘what will he grumble at next?’

‘I have a letter for you,’ said Tchitchikov, taking Plyushkin’s letter out of his pocket.

‘From whom?’ said the president, and breaking the seal he exclaimed, ‘Oh, from Plyushkin! So he is still freezing on in life. What a fate! A most intelligent man he used to be and very wealthy! And now . . .’

‘He is a cur,’ said Sobakevitch, ‘a scoundrel. He has starved his peasants to death.’

‘Certainly, certainly,’ said the president, reading the letter. ‘I am ready to act for him. When do you want to complete the purchase, now or later?’

‘Now,’ said Tchitchikov. ‘I will even ask you if possible to have it done to-day, as I should like to leave the town to-morrow. I have brought the deeds of purchase and my application.’

‘That’s all right; only, say what you like, we are not going to let you go so soon. The purchase shall be completed to-day, but you must stay with us a little all the same. I’ll give the order at once,’ he said, and opened the door of an office filled with clerks who might be compared to industrious bees busy upon their combs, if indeed honeycomb can be compared with legal duties. ‘Is Ivan Antonovitch there?’

‘Yes, here,’ answered a voice from within.

‘Kindly send him here.’

Ivan Antonovitch, the ‘jug snout’ with whom the reader is already familiar, entered the presidential chamber, making a respectful bow.

‘Here, Ivan Antonovitch, take all these deeds of purchase. . . .’

‘And don’t forget, Ivan Grigoryevitch,’ put in Sobakevitch, ‘we must have witnesses, two at least for each party. Send now to the prosecutor: he is a man of leisure and no doubt he is at home now. Zolotuha the attorney, the most grasping scoundrel on earth, does all his work for him. The inspector of the medical board is

another gentleman of leisure and sure to be at home, unless he has gone off somewhere for a game of cards; and there are lots of others, too, somewhat nearer, Truhatchevsky, Byegushkin—they all cumber the earth and do nothing.'

'Just so, just so,' said the president, and at once sent a messenger to fetch them all.

'Another request I have to make of you,' said Tchitchikov; 'send for the authorised representative of a lady from whom I have also made purchases, the son of Father Kirill, the head priest: he is employed here.'

'To be sure, we will send for him too,' said the president, 'everything shall be done, and do not give anything to the clerks; that I beg of you. My friends are not to pay.' Saying this he at once gave some order to Ivan Antonovitch, which evidently did not please him. The purchase of serfs evidently made a good impression on the president, especially when he saw that the purchases mounted up to a hundred thousand roubles. For some minutes he looked into Tchitchikov's face with an expression of great satisfaction, and at last said:

'Well, I must say! That's the way to do things, Pavel Ivanovitch! Well, you have got something worth having.'

'Yes, I have,' answered Tchitchikov.

'It's a good deed, it's a good deed really.'

'Yes, I see myself that I could not do anything that would be better. In any case a man's goal remains undefined, if he does not firmly take his

stand at last on a solid foundation and not on some free-thinking chimera of youth.'

Hereupon he very appropriately fell to abusing the liberalism of all young people—not without reason, indeed. But it is a remarkable fact that there was all the while a lack of assurance in his words, as though he were saying to himself: 'Ah, my lad, you are lying and lying hard too!'

He did not even glance at Sobakevitch or Manilov for fear of detecting something in their faces. But he had no need to be afraid. Sobakevitch's face did not stir a muscle, while Manilov, enchanted by his phrases, merely nodded his head approvingly in the attitude of a musical amateur when a prima donna outdoes the violin and shrills out a note higher than any bird's throat could produce.

'But why don't you tell Ivan Grigoryevitch,' Sobakevitch put in, 'what sort of stuff you have got? And you, Ivan Grigoryevitch, why don't you ask what his new acquisitions are like? They are something like peasants! Real gems! Do you know I have sold him Miheyev, my coach-builder?'

'You don't mean to say you have sold your Miheyev?' said the president. 'I know Miheyev the coachbuilder, a splendid craftsman; he did up my light cart. But, excuse me, how's that . . . Why, you told me that he was dead. . . .'

'Who? Miheyev dead?' said Sobakevitch, without a trace of embarrassment. 'It's his brother that's dead, but he is full of life and

better than he has ever been. The other day he made me a chaise better than anything they make in Moscow. He really ought to be working for the Tsar.'

'Yes, Miheyev is a fine craftsman,' said the president, 'and indeed I wonder you could bring yourself to part with him.'

'If it were only Miheyev! but Stepan Probka, my carpenter, Milushkin, my bricklayer, Maxim Telyatnikov, my bootmaker. They are all gone, I have sold them all!' And when the president asked him why he had got rid of them, considering that they were craftsmen whose work was essential for the house and estate, Sobakevitch answered with a wave of his hand: 'Well, it was simply my foolishness: "Come, I'll sell them," I thought, and I sold them in my foolishness.' Thereupon he hung his head as though he were regretting what he had done and added: 'Here my hair is turning grey, but I have got no sense yet.'

'But excuse me, Pavel Ivanovitch,' said the president, 'how is it you are buying peasants without land? Are you going to settle them elsewhere?'

'Yes.'

'Well, that's a different matter; in what part of the country?'

'In the Kherson province.'

'Oh, there is excellent land there!' said the president, and referred with great appreciation to the luxuriant growth of the grass in that district. 'And have you sufficient land?'

‘ Yes, as much as I shall need for the peasants I have bought.’

‘ Is there a river or a pond ? ’

‘ There is a river. There is a pond too, though.’ Tchitchikov chanced to look at Sobakevitch, and, although Sobakevitch was as immovable as ever, he could read in his face: ‘ Oh, you are lying! I doubt whether there is a river or a pond, or any land at all.’

While the conversation continued, the witnesses began to turn up, one by one, the winking prosecutor, already known to the reader, the inspector of the medical board, Truhatchevsky, Byegushkin and the others whom Sobakevitch had described as cumberers of the earth. With some of them Tchitchikov was quite unacquainted. The number was made up by taking some clerks from the office. Not only the son of Father Kirill but Father Kirill himself was brought. Each of the witnesses put down his name with all his grades and qualifications, some in an upright hand, others in a slanting handwriting, others forming letters almost upside down, such as had never been seen in the Russian alphabet. Ivan Antonovitch, known already to the reader, got through the business very rapidly, the purchase deeds were drawn up, revised, entered in a book and wherever else was necessary, and the half per cent. and charge for publication in the *Gazetteer* were made out, and Tchitchikov had to pay the merest trifle. The president even gave orders that only half the usual dues should be

charged to him, and the other half was in some mysterious way transferred to the account of some other applicant.

‘And now,’ said the president when all the formalities were over, ‘all that is left to do is to “sprinkle” the purchase.’

‘I am quite ready,’ said Tchitchikov. ‘You have only to name a time. It would be remiss if for such excellent company I did not uncork two or three bottles of fizz.’

‘No, you have got it wrong,’ said the president, ‘we’ll stand the fizz: that is what we ought to do, it is our duty. You are our guest, it is for us to entertain you. Do you know what, gentlemen? For the time being, this is what we will do: we’ll go, all of us as we are, to the police-master; he’s our wonder-worker; he has only to wink as he walks through the fish market or by the wine merchants; and we shall have a grand lunch, don’t you know! And a little game of whist for the occasion.’

No one could refuse such a proposition. The mere mention of the fish market gave the witnesses an appetite; they all picked up their hats and caps, and the presidential office was closed. As they walked through the clerks’ rooms, Ivan Antonovitch, the jug snout, bowing politely, said on the quiet to Tchitchikov: ‘You have bought peasants for a hundred thousand and only twenty-five roubles for my trouble.’

‘But what sort of peasants are they?’ Tchitchikov answered, also in a whisper, ‘a wretched,

good-for-nothing lot, not worth half that.' Ivan Antonovitch saw that he was a man of strong character and would not give more.

'And what made you buy souls from Plyushkin?' Sobakevitch whispered in his other ear.

'And why did you stick in Vorobey?' Tchitchikov retorted.

'What Vorobey?' said Sobakevitch.

'Why a woman, Elizaveta Vorobey, and you left out the *a* at the end of her name, too.'

'No, I did not stick in any Vorobey,' said Sobakevitch, and he walked off to rejoin the others.

The visitors arrived all together at the police-master's door. The police-master certainly was a wonder-worker: as soon as he heard what was wanted he called a policeman, a smart fellow in polished high boots, and seemed to whisper only a couple of words in his ear, merely adding: 'understand?' and at once, while the guests were playing whist, on the table in the next room there appeared a great sturgeon, dried salmon, pressed caviare and fresh caviare, herrings, star sturgeon, cheese, smoked tongue and dried sturgeon, all this came from the direction of the fish market. Then came various supplementary dishes created in the kitchen: a pie, made of the head and trimmings of a giant sturgeon, another pie made of mushrooms, tarts, butter-cakes, fritters. The police-master was in a sense the father and benefactor of the town. Among the people of the town, he was as though in the

bosom of his family, and looked after the shops and bazaar as though they were his own store-room. Altogether, he was, as the saying is, the right man in the right place, and understood his duties to perfection. It was hard, indeed, to say whether it was he who was created for his job or his job for him. His duties were so ably performed, that his income was double that of any of his predecessors, and at the same time he had won the love of the whole town. The merchants particularly loved him, just because he was not proud, and indeed he stood godfather to their children, and was friendly and convivial with them, though he did at times fleece them dreadfully, but he did it extremely cleverly. He would slap a man on the shoulder and laugh, treat him to tea, promise to come and play draughts, inquire about everything, how business was doing, and why and wherefore; if he heard that a child was ailing, he would advise a medicine. In short, he was a jolly fellow! He drove in his racing sledge and gave orders, and at the same time would drop a word here and there: 'I say, Mihyeitch, you and I ought to finish our rubber one of these days.' 'Yes, Alexey Ivanovitch,' the man would answer, taking off his hat, 'we ought to.' 'Hey, Ilya Paramonitch, old man, come round and have a look at my trotting horse, he'll beat yours in a race, and you must put yours in a racing droshky: we'll try him.' The merchant, who was mad on trotting horses, would smile at this with peculiar

relish and, stroking his beard, say: 'We'll try him, Alexey Ivanovitch.' Even the shopmen, who usually stood hat in hand at such times, looked at one another delighted, and seemed as though they would say: 'Alexey Ivanovitch is a splendid man!' In short, he had succeeded in gaining great popularity and it was the opinion of the merchants, that though Alexey Ivanovitch 'does take his share he never gives you away.'

Observing that the savouries were ready, the police-master suggested that they should finish their game after lunch, and they all trooped into the room, the smell issuing from which had begun some time previously to tickle their noses agreeably, and in at the door of which Sobakevitch had for some time been peeping, having noted from a distance the sturgeon lying on a big dish. After drinking a glass of a dark vodka, of that olive colour which is only seen in the transparent Siberian stones of which seals are carved in Russia, the guests approached the table from all sides, with forks in their hands, and began to display, as the saying is, each his character and propensities, one falling on the caviare, another on the dried salmon, another on the cheese. Sobakevitch, paying no attention to all these trifles, established himself by the sturgeon, and while the others were drinking, talking and eating, he in a little over a quarter of an hour had made his way through it, so that when the police-master recollected it, and saying: 'And what do you think, gentlemen, of this product of nature?'

went up, fork in hand, with others of the company towards it, he saw that nothing was left of the product of nature but its tail, while Sobakevitch effaced himself, and as though it were not his doing, went up to a dish at a little distance from the rest, and stuck his fork into some little dried fish. Having had enough with the sturgeon, Sobakevitch sat down in an easy-chair, ate and drank nothing more; he simply frowned and blinked. The police-master was apparently not given to sparing the wine; the toasts were innumerable. The first toast was, as the reader can probably guess for himself, drunk to the health of the new Kherson landowner, then to the prosperity of his peasants and their successful settlement in their new home, then to the health of that fair lady, his future bride, which elicited an agreeable smile from our hero. The company surrounded him on all sides and began earnestly pleading with him to remain with them, if only for another fortnight: 'Come, Pavel Ivanovitch! say what you will, to go off like this, it's just cooling the hut for nothing, as the saying is: coming to the door and going back again! Come, you must stay a little time with us! We'll make a match for you. We will, Ivan Grigoryevitch, won't we, we'll make a match for him?'

'We will, we will,' the president agreed. 'You may struggle hand and foot, but we will marry you all the same! No, my good sir, once you are here, it is no good your complaining. We are not to be trifled with.'

‘Why struggle hand and foot?’ said Tchitchikov, simpering, ‘matrimony is not such a . . . er . . . if there were but a bride.’

‘There shall be, there shall be! No fear about that. You shall have everything you want! . . .’

‘Oh, well, if so. . . .’

‘Bravo, he will stay,’ they all cried: ‘hurrah, hurrah, Pavel Ivanovitch! Hurrah!’

And they all pressed round him with their glasses in their hands to clink with his. Tchitchikov clinked glasses with every one. ‘Again, again,’ cried some of the more persistent and clinked glasses again, some pushed forward a third time and they clinked glasses once more. In a little while they were all extraordinarily lively. The president, who was a most charming person when he was a little elevated, embraced Tchitchikov several times, exclaiming in the fullness of his heart: ‘My dear soul, my precious!’ and even, snapping his fingers, fell to pirouetting round him, humming the well-known song, ‘You are this and you are that, you Kamarinsky peasant!’ After the champagne, they opened some bottles of Hungarian wine, which put still more spirit into the party and made them merrier than ever. The whist was completely forgotten. They disputed, shouted, talked about everything, about politics, even about military matters, giving expression to advanced ideas for which at any other time they would have thrashed their own children. They settled on the spot a number of the most difficult questions. Tchitchikov had

never felt so merry, he imagined himself already a genuine Kherson landowner, talked of various improvements he meant to make, of the three-field system of cropping, of the bliss and happiness of two kindred souls, and began repeating to Sobakevitch Werther's letter in verse to Charlotte, on which the latter merely blinked as he sat in an armchair, for after the sturgeon he felt a great inclination for sleep. Tchitchikov perceived himself that he had begun to be a little too expansive: he asked for his carriage, and accepted the offer of the prosecutor's racing droshky. The prosecutor's coachman was, as it turned out on the way, an efficient and experienced fellow, for he drove with one hand only, while he held the gentleman on with the other hand thrust out behind him. It was in this fashion that our hero arrived at his hotel, where his tongue still went on babbling all sorts of nonsense about a fair-haired bride with a rosy complexion and a dimple in her right cheek, estates in Kherson, and investments. Selifan even received some orders in regard to the management of the estate, he was told to collect together all the newly settled peasants that they might all answer to a roll-call. Selifan listened for a long time in silence and then went out of the room, saying to Petrushka: 'Go and undress the master!' Petrushka set to work to pull off his boots and nearly pulled his master on to the floor with them. At last the boots were off, the master was properly undressed, and after turning over several

times on the bed, which creaked mercilessly, he fell asleep like a genuine Kherson landowner. Meanwhile Petrushka carried out into the passage his master's breeches and his shot cranberry-coloured coat, and spreading them out on a wooden hatstand began beating and brushing them, filling the whole corridor with dust. As he was about to take the clothes down, he glanced over the banisters, and saw Selifan coming in from the stable. Their eyes met, they understood each other: the master had gone to sleep and they could go and look in somewhere. Instantly taking the coat and trousers into the room, Petrushka went downstairs and they set off together, without one word to each other as to the object of their journey, chattering on the way upon quite extraneous matters. They did not walk far: in fact they only went to the other side of the street to a house that was opposite the hotel, and in at a low grimy glass door, which led down almost to the cellar, where many people of different sorts, shaven and unshaven, in plain sheepskins or simply in their shirt sleeves, and here and there a frieze overcoat, were sitting at the wooden tables. What Petrushka and Selifan did there, God only knows; but they came out an hour later, arm in arm, maintaining complete silence, showing great solicitude for each other, and steering each other clear of all corners. Still arm in arm they spent a quarter of an hour getting up the stairs, at last got the better of them and reached the top. Petrushka

stood for a minute facing his low bed, considering which way it would be more suitable to lie on it, and finally lay across it at right angles, so that his legs were on the floor. Selifan lay down on the same bed with his head on Petrushka's stomach, oblivious of the fact that he ought not to have been sleeping there, but perhaps in the servants' room, or even in the stable, with the horses. They both fell asleep at the same instant and raised a snore of an incredibly deep note, to which their master responded from the next room with a refined nasal whistle. Soon afterwards everything was still and all the hotel was wrapped in profound slumber; only in one window a light was still to be seen, from the room occupied by the lieutenant from Kazan, apparently a great connoisseur in boots, for he had already bought himself four pairs and was continually trying on a fifth. Several times he went up to his bed to take them off and go to bed, but could not bring himself to do so; the boots were certainly well made, and he still sat a long while lifting up his foot and scrutinising the smartly and beautifully shaped heel.

CHAPTER VIII

TCHITCHIKOV'S purchases became the subject of conversation. Discussions took place in the town, views and opinions were expressed as to whether purchasing serfs for removal to another district were a profitable undertaking. From the controversy it appeared that many possessed a thorough understanding of the subject. 'Of course it's all right,' said some people, 'there is no disputing it: the land in the southern provinces is undoubtedly good and fertile, but how are Tchitchikov's peasants going to get on without water? You know there is no river.'

'That wouldn't matter, there being no water; that wouldn't matter, Stepan Dmitryevitch; but transporting peasants is a risky business. We all know what the peasant is; put down on fresh land and set to till it, and with nothing for him, no hut, no firewood—why he'd run away as sure as twice two makes four, he'd take to his heels and leave no trace behind him.'

'No, Alexey Ivanovitch, excuse me, I don't agree with what you say that Tchitchikov's peasants will run away. The Russian is capable of tackling anything, and can stand any climate. Send him to Kamchatka and just give him warm

gloves, he'll clap his hands together, pick up his axe and go off to hew logs for his new hut.'

'But, Ivan Grigoryevitch, you have lost sight of one important point; you haven't asked yourself what sort of peasants Tchitchikov's are, you have forgotten that a good man is never sold by his master. I'll stake my head that Tchitchikov's peasants are thieves, hopeless drunkards, sluggards and of unruly behaviour.'

'To be sure, to be sure, I quite agree, that's true, no one will sell good serfs, and Tchitchikov's peasants are drunkards, but you must take into consideration that there is a moral point involved, that it is a moral question; they are good-for-nothing fellows now but, settled on new land, they may become excellent serfs. There are many such instances both in daily life and history.'

'Never, never,' said the superintendent of the government factories, 'believe me, that can never be, for Tchitchikov's peasants will have two terrible foes to face. The first is the proximity of the provinces of Little Russia, where as you all know there is no control of the Liquor Trade. I assure you within a fortnight they will all be as drunk as cobblers. The other danger arises from their inevitably growing used to a wandering life during their migration. They will have to be constantly before Tchitchikov's eyes, and he will have to keep a very tight hold over them, punish them for every trifle, and it will be no good for him to rely on any one else, he must give them a

punch in the face or a bang on the head when necessary with his own hands.'

'Why should Tchitchikov have to bother and to knock them about himself? He may get a steward.'

'Well, you get him a steward: they are all rogues!'

'They are rogues because the masters don't go into things themselves.'

'That's true,' several persons assented. 'If the master has some notion of management himself and is a judge of character, he always gets a good steward.'

But the superintendent of the factories said that you couldn't get a good steward for less than five thousand roubles. Then the president maintained that you could find one for three thousand. But the superintendent protested: 'Where are you going to find him, he is not just under your nose?'

And the president said: 'No, not under my nose, but in this district; I mean Pyotr Petrovitch Samoylov; he is the steward Tchitchikov's peasants need!'

Many threw themselves warmly into Tchitchikov's position, and the difficulty of transporting so vast a number of peasants alarmed them extremely; they began to be greatly apprehensive of an actual mutiny arising among peasants so unruly as Tchitchikov's. To this the police-master observed that there was no need to be afraid of a mutiny, that the authority of the police-captain

existed to prevent such a thing, that the police-captain himself need not go, that if he merely sent his cap, the sight of the cap would be enough to take the peasants all the way to their new home. Many persons offered suggestions for eradicating the mutinous spirit agitating Tchitchikov's peasants. The suggestions were of various kinds. There were some which had a strong flavour of military harshness and even severity, though there were others distinguished by their mildness. The postmaster observed that Tchitchikov had a sacred duty before him, that he might become, as he expressed it, something like a father to his peasants, that he might carry out the philanthropic work of enlightenment, and incidentally, he referred with approval to the Lancastrian system of education.

So they argued and discussed it in the town, and many persons, moved by their sympathy, communicated some of this advice to Tchitchikov, and even offered him an escort to ensure the arrival of the peasants in safety at their new homes. Tchitchikov thanked them for their advice, saying that he would not fail to follow it should occasion arise, but he resolutely declined the escort, maintaining that it was quite unnecessary, that the peasants he had bought were of an exemplarily docile character, and were themselves favourably disposed to migration, and that there could not possibly be a mutiny among them.

All these arguments and discussions, however, led to a more agreeable result than Tchitchikov

could possibly have expected, that is, to the rumour that he was neither more nor less than a millionaire. The people of the town had already, as we have seen in the first chapter, taken a great liking to Tchitchikov, and after this rumour spread among them, their liking for him was even greater. Though, to tell the truth, they were all good-natured people, got on well together, and behaved in a friendly way to each other, and indeed, there was a peculiar note of kindness and good humour in their conversation: 'My dear friend, Ilya Ilyitch!' . . . 'I say, Antipator Zaharyevitch, old man!' . . . 'You are drawing the long bow, Ivan Grigoryevitch, my precious.' . . . When addressing Ivan Andreyevitch, people always added: 'Sprechen Sie Deutsch,¹ Ivan Andreitch.' . . . In short they were all like one family. Many of them had some degree of culture; the president of the court of justice knew by heart Zhukovsky's 'Ludmila,' which was then a great novelty, and recited many passages in masterly fashion, especially 'The forest sleeps, the valley slumbers,' and the word 'Tchoo!' so that they really seemed to see the valley slumbering; for greater effect he actually closed his eyes at the passage. The postmaster was more devoted to philosophy and read diligently even at night, Young's *Night Thoughts* and *The Key to the Mysteries of Nature*, by Eckartshausen, from which he copied out very long

¹ Pronounced by Russians 'Deitch' so that it rhymes with Andreitch.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

extracts ; but no one knew what they were about. He was however a wit, flowery in his language, and fond as he expressed it of flavouring his words. And he did flavour his words with a number of all sorts of little phrases such as : ‘ My dear sir, you know, you understand, you can fancy, as regards, so to say, in a certain sense,’ and so on, which he scattered freely about him ; he flavoured his language also rather successfully by winking and screwing up one eye, which gave a very biting expression to many of his satirical allusions. The others were all more or less cultured people, one read Karamzin, another read the *Moscow News*, while there were others who actually read nothing at all. Some were the sort of men who need a kick to make them rise to anything ; others were simply sluggards lying all their lives on one side, as the saying is, and it would have been a waste of time to lift them up, they wouldn’t have stood up under any circumstances. As far as health and appearance goes, they were all, as we have said already, sound people, there wasn’t one consumptive among them. They were all of the kind to whom wives in moments of tender *tête-à-tête* use such endearing epithets as ‘ tubby,’ ‘ fatty,’ ‘ chubby,’ ‘ dumpling,’ ‘ zou-zou,’ and so on. But, take them all in all, they were a good-natured set, full of hospitality, and a man who had eaten their salt or spent the evening playing whist with them was at once near and dear to them, and Tchitchikov, with his fascinating qualities and manners, and his real

understanding of the great secret of pleasing was, of course, especially so. They had grown so fond of him that he did not know how to tear himself from the town; he heard nothing but: 'Come, a week, just one short week more, you must stay with us, Pavel Ivanovitch!' In fact he was, as the saying is, carried along in triumph. But incomparably more remarkable (truly a marvel!) was the impression which Tchitchikov made upon the ladies. To make even a partial explanation of it, one would have to say a great deal of the ladies themselves, of their society and their surroundings, to describe in living colours, as it is called, their spiritual qualities; but that is very difficult for the author. On the one hand he is restrained by his unbounded respect for the spouses of the higher officials, and on the other hand . . . on the other hand, it is simply too difficult. The ladies of the town of N. were . . . no, I really can't: I really feel shy. What was most remarkable in the ladies of the town of N. was . . . It is positively strange my pen refuses to move, as though it were weighted with lead. So be it: it seems I must leave the painting of their characters to some one whose colours are more vivid, and who has a greater variety on his palette; while I confine myself to a few words about their exterior and their superficial characteristics. The ladies of the town of N. were what is called *presentable*, and in that respect one may boldly hold them up as an example to all others. As regards deportment, elevation of

tone, observance of etiquette and of a multitude of the most refined rules of propriety, and, above all, as regards following the fashion to its minutest details, they actually surpassed the ladies of Petersburg and Moscow. They dressed with great taste, and drove about the town in carriages, with a footman perched up behind, in a livery with gold lace on it, as prescribed by the latest fashion. A visiting card, even if it were written on a two of clubs or an ace of diamonds, was a very sacred thing. Two ladies, great friends and even relations, were completely estranged on account of a card, just because one of them had somehow failed to return a call. And in spite of all the efforts of their husbands and relations to reconcile them afterwards, it appeared that one may do anything else in the world, but that one thing is impossible—to reconcile two ladies who have quarrelled over failure to leave a card. And so the two ladies were left, ‘mutually indisposed’ as the society of the town expressed it. The question of precedence also gave rise to many violent scenes, inspiring sometimes in their husbands a chivalrous and noble-minded conception of the duty of championing them. Duels of course did not occur because the gentlemen were all in the civil service, but on the other hand they tried to play each other nasty tricks wherever possible, and that as every one knows, is sometimes worse than any duel. In moral principles the ladies of N. were severe, full of noble indignation at everything vicious, and every form

of depravity, and they punished every weakness without mercy. If what is known as a 'thing or two' did occur, it was kept dark so that there was no outward sign of its having occurred; every dignity was preserved and the husband himself was so well primed, that if he did see a 'thing or two,' or heard of it, he responded mildly and reasonably with the popular saying: What does it matter to any one else, if the godfather sits with the godmother?

Another thing I must mention about the ladies of N. is that, like many Petersburg ladies, they were distinguished by great niceness and propriety in their choice of words and expressions. They never said: 'I blew my nose, I got into a sweat, I spat,' but used instead some such expression as: 'I made use of my handkerchief.' It was out of the question to say under any circumstances 'that glass or that plate stinks,' or even to say anything that would suggest it; they said instead 'that glass is not quite agreeable,' or something of the sort. To refine and elevate the Russian language, fully half the words in it were rejected from their vocabulary, and so it was very often necessary to have recourse to French; but in French it was quite a different matter; in that language they permitted themselves expressions far coarser than those mentioned above. So much for what may be said of the ladies of N., speaking superficially. Though, of course, if one were to look more deeply, many other things would be discovered, but it is very

dangerous to look too deeply into the feminine heart.

And so, confining ourselves to the superficial, we will continue. Hitherto the ladies had said very little of Tchitchikov, though they gave him full credit for his agreeable demeanour in company, but from the time that there were rumours of his being a millionaire, other qualities were discerned in him. Though, indeed, the ladies were not at all mercenary-minded: the word millionaire was to blame—not the millionaire himself but just the word; for in the mere sound of that word, altogether apart from the money-bags, there is something which produces an effect upon people who are scoundrels, upon people who are neither one thing nor the other, and upon good people too, that is, produces an effect upon all. The millionaire has the advantage of meeting with servility that is quite disinterested, pure servility resting on no secondary motives: many people know perfectly well that they will never get a farthing from him and have no right to expect it, but yet will not fail to run to anticipate his wishes, to laugh at his jokes, to take off their hats, to wring an invitation for themselves to a dinner where they know he will be. It cannot be said that this tender inclination to servility was felt by the ladies; in many drawing-rooms, however, it began to be said that Tchitchikov was, of course, not strikingly handsome, but he was quite what a man ought to be, that if he were stouter or fatter, it would be a pity. And inci-

dentally the observation was made—somewhat slighting to thin men in general—that they were more like toothpicks than men. All sorts of additional touches appeared in the attire of the ladies. There was quite a crowd, almost a crush in the arcade; there were so many carriages driving up to it that they were a regular procession. The shopkeepers were astonished at seeing that some pieces of material, which they had brought from the fair and could not get rid of on account of the price, had suddenly become the rage, and were snapped up regardless of expense. At mass in church one lady had a stiff flounce at the bottom of her skirt, which stuck it out so far all round her, that the police inspector of the quarter, who happened to be present, ordered the people to move further back, that they might not crush her honour's costume. Tchitchikov himself could not help noticing the extraordinary attention paid him. One day on returning home he found a letter lying on his table. He could not find out from whom it came or who had brought it: the waiter informed him that it had been brought with orders not to say from whom it came. The letter began with great determination, in these words in fact: 'Yes, I must write to you!' then something was said about a mysterious affinity of souls; this truth was confirmed by a number of dots which filled up half a line. Then followed several reflections so remarkable for their justice, that we feel it almost essential to quote them:

‘What is our life? A vale in which grief has taken up its abode. What is the world? The crowd of the unfeeling.’ Then the writer mentioned that she was bedewing the lines with tears for a tender mother, who twenty-five years before had left this earthly sphere; Tchitchikov was invited to flee to the desert, to abandon forever the town where, shut in by spiritual barriers, people did not breathe the air of freedom; the latter part of the letter had a note of positive despair, and ended with the following verses :

‘Two turtle doves will show thee
Where my cold ashes lie
And sadly murmuring tell thee
How in tears I did die.’

The last line did not scan, that did not matter, though: the letter was written in the spirit of the day. There was no signature: neither Christian name nor surname nor even the date. But a postscript was added to the effect that his own heart should divine who was the writer, and that the author would be at the governor’s ball that was to take place on the following day.

This greatly interested him. There was so much that was alluring and that excited the curiosity in the anonymity of it, that he read the letter through a second and a third time, and said at last: ‘It would be interesting, though, to know who the writer is!’ In fact, things were becoming serious, as may be seen. He

spent more than an hour brooding over it. At last, flinging wide his hands and nodding his head, he said : ' The letter is very, very fancifully written ! ' Then, I need hardly say, the letter was folded up and put in his case beside an advertisement and an invitation to a wedding, which had been preserved for seven years in the same place and position. Shortly afterwards an invitation actually was brought him for the governor's ball, a very common event in provincial towns : where there is a governor, there there is a ball, or the nobility would not pay him due respect and love.

Every other consideration was instantly dismissed and thrust aside, and every thought was concentrated on preparations for the ball, for indeed there were many exciting and stimulating circumstances connected with it. Probably so much time and effort had never since the creation of the world been devoted to the toilet. A whole hour was spent merely in scrutinising his countenance in the looking-glass. Attempts were made to assume a great variety of expressions : at one moment important and dignified, at the next, respectful with a smile, then, simply respectful without a smile ; several bows were made to the looking-glass, accompanied by vague sounds, somewhat resembling French, though Tchitchikov did not know French at all. He even attempted several new and surprising tricks, twisted his eyebrows and his lips and even tried to do something with his tongue ; as a matter

of fact, there is no limit to what one may do when left alone and feeling that one is a handsome fellow and convinced, moreover, that no one will be looking through a crack. At last he gave his chin a slap, saying, 'Bless me, what a mug!' and began dressing. The whole process of dressing was accompanied by an agreeable and contented feeling: as he put on his braces or tied his cravat, he bowed and scraped with peculiar sprightliness, and though he had never danced in his life, he cut a caper. This caper had a small and harmless consequence: the chest of drawers shook and the brush fell on the floor.

His arrival at the ball made an extraordinary impression. Every one turned to greet him, one with cards in his hand, another at the most interesting point in the conversation as he uttered the words: 'And the lower district court maintains in answer to that . . .' but what the district court did maintain he abandoned altogether and hastened to welcome our hero. 'Pavel Ivanovitch! Ah, goodness me, Pavel Ivanovitch! Dear Pavel Ivanovitch! Honoured Pavel Ivanovitch! My dear soul, Pavel Ivanovitch! Ah, here you are, Pavel Ivanovitch! Here he is, our Pavel Ivanovitch! Allow me to embrace you, Pavel Ivanovitch! Hand him over, let me give him a good kiss, my precious Pavel Ivanovitch!' Tchitchikov instantly felt himself clasped in the embrace of several friends. He had hardly succeeded in completely extricating himself from

the embrace of the president, when he found himself in the arms of the police-master; the police-master passed him on to the inspector of the medical board; the inspector of the medical board handed him over to the government contractor, and the latter passed him on to the architect. . . . The governor, who was at the moment standing by some ladies, with a motto from a bon-bon in one hand and a lap-dog in the other, dropped both motto and lap-dog on the floor on seeing him—the dog raised a shrill yelp—in short, Tchitchikov was the centre of extraordinary joy and delight. There was not a face that did not express pleasure or at least a reflection of the general pleasure. So it is with the faces of government clerks when the offices in their charge are being inspected by a newly arrived chief: when their first panic has passed off, and they see that he is pleased with a great deal and when he has graciously condescended to jest, that is to pronounce a few words with an agreeable simper, and the clerks standing near him laugh twice as much in response, those who have scarcely caught his words laugh with all their hearts too, and last of all a policeman, standing far away at the door at the very entrance, who has never laughed in his life, and has just before been shaking his fist at the people, is moved by the unalterable laws of reflection to show upon his face a smile, though it looks more as though he were sneezing after a strong pinch of snuff.

Our hero responded to all and each, and was

aware of a peculiar ease : he bowed to right and to left, a little to one side as he always did, but with perfect grace, so that he charmed every one. The ladies surrounded him with a galaxy of beauty, and wafted with them perfect clouds of sweet scents, one smelt of roses, another was breathing of spring and violets, another was saturated through and through with mignonette. Tchitchikov could only throw up his nose and sniff. A vast deal of taste was displayed in their attire ; muslins, satins, chiffons were of those pale, fashionable shades, for which it is impossible to find a name, so refined is modern taste ! Bows of ribbon and bunches of flowers were dotted here and there about their dresses in most picturesque disorder, though this disorder had cost an orderly brain a great deal of trouble. The light ornaments that adorned their heads held on only by the ears, and seemed to be saying : ‘ Aie ! I am taking flight, and the only pity is that I can’t carry the beauty away with me ! ’ The waists were tightly laced and had the most firm and agreeable contour (it must be noted that generally speaking the ladies of the town of N. were rather plump, but they laced so skilfully and held themselves so gracefully, that their stoutness was not noticeable). Everything had been thought out and looked after with special care : necks and shoulders were bared just as far as was right and not a bit further ; each one displayed her possessions so far as she felt from her inner conviction that they were calculated

to slay her man. The rest was all covered up with extraordinary taste; either some light ribbon neck-band, dainty as the sweets known as 'kisses,' ethereally encircled the neck, or little scalloped edgings of fine batiste known as 'modesties,' emerged under the dress behind the shoulders. These 'modesties' concealed in front and at the back what was not calculated to play havoc with the heart of man, and at the same time they aroused the suspicion that the very centre of danger was there. The long gloves were drawn up not quite to meet the sleeves, but the most alluring part of the arm above the elbow, in many cases of an enviable plumpness, was intentionally left bare; some ladies had even split their kid gloves in the effort to push them up higher—in short everything seemed to be imprinted with the words: 'No, this is not a provincial town, this is Petersburg, this is Paris!' Only here and there a cap of a species never seen on earth before, or some feather, perhaps from a peacock, stood up in accordance with individual taste and in defiance of the dictates of fashion. But there is no escaping that; such originality is characteristic of a provincial town, it is bound to break out somewhere. Tchitchikov stood before them, wondering who could be the authoress of the letter, and he was about to crane his head forward for a better look round when a whole procession of elbows, cuffs, sleeves, ends of ribbons, perfumed chemisettes and dresses flashed by under his very nose. The

galop was at its height: the postmaster's wife, the police-captain, a lady with a pale blue feather, a lady with a white feather, the Georgian prince, Tchiphaihilidzev, an official from Petersburg, an official from Moscow, a French gentleman called Coucou, Perhunovsky, Berebendovsky, all pranced up and down and flew by. . . .

'Well, they are all at it!' Tchitchikov said to himself as he stepped back, and, as soon as the ladies had sat down in their places, he began scanning them again to see whether from the expression on some face or the look in some eyes he could recognise the authoress of the letter; but it was utterly impossible to recognise either from the expression of the face or the look in the eyes which was she. Everywhere there could be discerned something faintly betrayed, something elusively subtle—oh, how subtle! . . .

'No,' Tchitchikov said to himself, 'women really are . . . a subject . . .' Here he waved his hand hopelessly. 'It's simply no use talking! Go and try to describe all that is flitting over their faces, all the roundabout devices, the hints. . . . But you simply couldn't describe it. Their eyes alone are a boundless realm which a man explores—and is lost for ever! You can never get him back by hook or by crook. Just try describing, for instance, the mere light in them: melting, velvety, full of sweetness and goodness knows what besides; cruel and soft and quite languishing too, or as some say, voluptuous, or not voluptuous, but especially when voluptuous

—and it catches the heart and plays upon the soul like a violin bow. No, there is simply no finding the words: the *fine fleur* half of the human species and that's all about it.'

I beg your pardon! I believe an expression overheard in the street has just escaped from the lips of my hero. I could not help it! Such is the sad plight of an author in Russia! Though, indeed, if a word overheard in the streets does creep into a book, it is not the author who is to blame, but the readers, and especially the readers of the best society; it is from them, above all others, that you never hear a decent Russian word, but they must reel off French, German and English phrases beyond anything you could wish for, and they even keep to every possible pronunciation—French they speak through their nose with a lisp, English they twitter like a bird in the correct way; and even look like birds as they speak it, and positively laugh at those who cannot make their faces look like birds'. They never contribute anything Russian, at most their patriotism leads them to build a peasant's hut in the Russian style for a summer bungalow. So that's what readers of the best society are like, and all who rank themselves as such follow their example. And at the same time how exacting they are! They insist that everything must be written in the most rigidly correct language, purified and refined—in fact they want the Russian language to descend of itself from the clouds, all finished and polished, and settle on their

tongue, leaving them nothing to do but open their mouth and stick it out. Of course, the feminine half of the human species is not easy to understand; but our worthy readers are sometimes even more difficult to make out.

And meanwhile Tchitchikov was completely puzzled to decide which of the ladies was the authoress of the letter. Trying to look more intently, he perceived on the ladies' side, too, an expression calculated to inspire at once such hope and such sweet torture in the heart of a poor mortal that he said at last: 'No, there is no guessing!' This, however, did not detract from his cheerful frame of mind. In the most unconstrained way he exchanged a few agreeable phrases with some of the ladies, went up first to one and then to another with little mincing steps, with the tripping gait affected by little foppish old gentlemen with high heels, midget bucks, as they are called, who skip very nimbly to and fro among the ladies. Turning rather adroitly to right and to left, as he tripped along, he scraped with one foot as though drawing a short tail or a comma on the floor. The ladies were very well pleased with him and not only discovered in him a wealth of agreeable and amiable qualities, but even discerned a majestic expression in his countenance, even something martial and military which, as we all know, greatly attracts the fair sex. They even began quarrelling a little over him. Noticing that he generally stood near the door, some hastened abruptly to take seats nearer the door, and, when one succeeded

in doing so first, there was very nearly an unpleasant scene, and such forwardness seemed positively revolting to many who had been desirous of doing the same.

Tchitchikov was so absorbed in his conversation with the ladies, or to be more accurate, the ladies so engrossed and overwhelmed him with their conversation, interspersing a number of ingenious and subtly allegorical remarks—his brow was perspiring with the effort to interpret their meaning—that he forgot the rules of good manners and did not go up first to his hostess. He thought of this only when he heard the voice of the governor's wife who had been standing before him for some minutes. The lady, shaking her head archly, said in a rather caressing and insinuating voice: 'Ah, so this is where you are, Pavel Ivanovitch!' I cannot accurately reproduce the lady's words, but something was said, full of the greatest politeness, in the style in which ladies and gentlemen express themselves in the works of the society novelists who devote themselves to describing drawing-rooms and pride themselves on their knowledge of aristocratic manners, something in the style of—'Have they taken such possession of your heart that you have no room left in it, not even the tiniest corner for those you have so mercilessly forgotten?' Our hero instantly faced about to the governor's wife, and was on the point of making a reply, probably in no way inferior to those uttered by the Zvonskys, the Linskys, the Lidins, the Gremins and all

the other accomplished officers in fashionable novels, when, chancing to raise his eyes, he stood rooted to the spot.

It was not the governor's wife alone who stood before him; on her arm was a fresh-looking fair-haired girl of sixteen, with delicate and graceful features, a pointed chin, and a face of an enchantingly rounded oval, such as an artist might have taken as a model for his Madonna, and such as is rarely seen in Russia, where everything, whatever it may be, is apt to be on a broad scale: mountains, forests, steppes, faces, lips, and feet. It was the same fair-haired girl whom he had met on his way back from Nozdryov's when through the stupidity of the coachman or the horses, their carriages had come so strangely into collision, when their harness was entangled and Uncle Mitya and Uncle Minyay undertook to extricate them.

Tchitchikov was so overcome that he could utter nothing coherent, and goodness knows what he mumbled, something that certainly no Gremin, Zvonsky or Lidin would have said.

'You don't know my daughter?' said the governor's wife, 'she has only just left school.'

He said that he had already by chance had the happiness of making her acquaintance; he tried to say something more, but the something more did not come off. The governor's wife said two or three words, and then went off with her daughter to the other end of the drawing-room to talk to other guests; while Tchitchikov still

remained motionless at the same spot, like a man who having gaily sallied out into the street for a walk, with eyes disposed to observe everything, suddenly stands stock-still thinking he has forgotten something; and nothing can look stupider than such a man: instantly, the careless expression vanishes from his face; he struggles to recall what he has forgotten: was it his handkerchief?—but his handkerchief is still in his pocket; was it his money?—but his money too is in his pocket, he seems to have everything, but yet some unseen spirit keeps whispering in his ear that he has forgotten something. And now he looks blankly and absent-mindedly at the moving crowd before him, at the carriages dashing by, at the shakos and guns of the regiment marching by, at the signboard on the shop, and sees nothing clearly. So Tchitchikov suddenly became aloof from all that was passing around him. Meanwhile a number of hints and questions saturated with refinement and politeness were aimed at him from the fragrant lips of the ladies, such as: ‘Is it permissible for us, poor dwellers in this earthly sphere, to be so audacious as to ask the subject of your dreams?’ ‘Where may those happy regions be to which your thoughts have taken flight?’ ‘May we know the name of her who has plunged you into this sweet vale of reverie?’ But he paid absolutely no attention, and the agreeable phrases were completely thrown away. He was even so uncivil as to walk away from them hurriedly to the other end of the room,

anxious to find out where the governor's wife had gone with her daughter. But the ladies were not, it seemed, disposed to let him escape so easily, every one of them inwardly determined to use all those weapons so menacing to the peace of our hearts, and to turn her best points to the best possible advantage. I must observe that some ladies—I say some, that is, not all ladies—have a little weakness: if a lady notices anything particularly attractive in herself—whether lips or brow or hand—she is apt to imagine that her best point is conspicuous and is attracting the notice of every one, and that all are saying with one voice: ‘Look, look, hasn't she a lovely Grecian nose!’ or, ‘What a smooth and fascinating brow!’ One who has good shoulders is confident that all the young men will be completely captivated, and will be continually repeating when she passes: ‘What marvellous shoulders she has!’ and that they will not glance at her face, her hair, her nose, her brow, or if they do, it will be as at something quite apart. That is what some ladies imagine. Every lady took an inward vow to be as fascinating as possible in the dances, and to display in all the brilliance of its perfection whatever was most perfect in her. The postmaster's wife put her head on one side so languishingly as she waltzed that it really gave one a feeling of something unearthly. One very amiable lady who had come with no idea of dancing at all on account of, as she herself expressed it, a slight *incommodity* in the shape of

a small callosity on her right foot, in consequence of which she had actually been obliged to put on plush boots, could not resist joining the dance and taking a few turns in her plush boots, solely to prevent the postmaster's wife from really thinking too much of herself.

But all this did not produce the effect anticipated on Tchitchikov. He did not even look at the circles described by the ladies, but was continually rising on tiptoe to peep over people's heads, and see where the interesting fair one had gone; he stooped down too, to look between backs and shoulders; at last his search was successful, and he saw her sitting with her mother, on whose head a sort of oriental turban with a feather was nodding majestically. He seemed to mean to take them by storm. Whether the influence of spring affected him or some one was pushing from behind, he pressed resolutely forward, regardless of everything: the spirit tax contractor was so violently pushed aside by him, that he staggered and only just succeeded in balancing himself on one leg, or he would have brought a whole row of others down with him; the postmaster too stepped back and looked at him in amazement mixed with rather subtle irony; but he did not look at them: he saw nothing but the fair girl in the distance, pulling on a long glove, and no doubt burning with impatience to be flying over the parquet floor.

And already four couples were dancing the mazurka, heels were tapping on the floor, and an

army captain was working hard with body and soul and arms and legs, executing such steps as no one had ever executed before in his wildest dreams. Tchitchikov dashed by the mazurka almost on the dancers' heels, and straight to the place where the governor's wife was sitting with her daughter. He approached them, however, very timidly; he did not trip up to them with jaunty and foppish little steps, he even shifted from one foot to the other uneasily, and there was an awkwardness in all his movements.

It cannot be said for certain that the passion of love was stirring in our hero's heart: it is doubtful, indeed, if gentlemen of his sort, that is, not precisely fat and yet not what you would call thin, are capable of falling in love; but for all that there was something strange about it, something which he could not have explained to himself; it seemed to him, as he admitted to himself afterwards, as though the whole ball with all its noise and conversation became for a few minutes, as it were, far away; the fiddles and trumpets droned somewhere in the distance, and all were lost in fog like some carelessly painted background in a picture. And from this foggy, roughly sketched background nothing stood out clearly but the delicate features of the fair charmer: the oval little face, the slender, slender figure such as one sees only in girls who have just left school, the white, almost plain dress lightly and elegantly draping her graceful young limbs, and following their pure lines. It seemed as though she

were like some toy, delicately carved out of ivory; she alone stood out white, transparent and full of light against the dingy and opaque crowd.

It seems that it does sometimes happen; it seems that even the Tchitchikovs are for a few moments in their lives transformed into poets; though the word 'poet' is too much. Anyway he felt quite like a young man, almost an hussar. Seeing an empty chair beside them, he instantly took it. Conversation flagged at first, but afterwards things went better, he even began to gain confidence. . . . At this point to my great regret I must observe that dignified persons occupying important posts are somewhat ponderous in conversation with ladies; at this lieutenants are first-rate, no officers of a rank higher than a captain's are any good at it. Goodness only knows how they manage it: it seems as though they are not saying anything very subtle, but the young lady is continually rocking with laughter. Goodness knows what a civil councillor will talk to her about, either he will begin informing her that Russia is a vast empire, or will launch out into a compliment which, though doubtless wittily conceived, has a terribly bookish flavour; if he says something funny, he will laugh at it himself ever so much more than the fair one who is listening to him. This fact is here noted that the reader may see why it was that the governor's daughter yawned while our hero was talking to her. The latter completely failed, however, to

observe this, as he repeated to her a number of agreeable things, which he had already said on various occasions before in various places, to wit: in the Simbirsk province at Sofron Ivanovitch Bezpetchny's, where there were three young ladies, Adelaida Sofronovna and her three sisters-in-law—Marie Gavrilovna, Alexandra Gavrilovna and Adelheida Gavrilovna; at Fyodor Fyodorovitch Perekroev's in the province of Ryazan; at Frol Vassilyevitch Pobyedonosny's in the province of Penza, and at the house of his brother, Pyotr Vassilyevitch, where were his sister-in-law, Katerina Mihailovna and her second cousins Rosa Fyodorovna and Amilia Fyodorovna; in the province of Vyatka, at the house of Pyotr Varsonofyevitch in the presence of his betrothed's sister, Pelageya Yegorovna and his niece, Sofya Rostislavna and her two half-sisters Sofya Alexandrovna and Maklatura Alexandrovna.

All the ladies were greatly displeased with Tchitchikov's behaviour. One of them purposely walked by him in order to let him see this, and even rather carelessly brushed against the fair charmer with the thick flounce of her dress, and managed so that the end of the scarf that fluttered round her shoulders flapped right into the young lady's face; at the same time a rather biting and malignant observation floated together with the scent of violets from the lips of a lady behind him. But either he really did not hear, or he pretended not to hear, and in either case he did wrong, for one must attach importance

to the opinions of the ladies: he regretted it, but only afterwards, and consequently too late.

An expression of perfectly justifiable indignation was apparent on many faces. Whatever weight Tchitchikov might have in society, though he might be a millionaire, though there might be an expression of majesty and even something martial and military in his face, yet there are things that ladies can forgive in no one, whoever he may be, and then one must simply write him down—lost! There are cases in which a woman, however weak and helpless compared with a man, becomes all at once harder, not merely than a man, but than anything on earth. Tchitchikov's almost unconscious neglect restored among the ladies the concord and harmony which had been on the brink of ruin through the competition for a seat next him. Sarcastic allusions were discovered in brief and ordinary phrases he had uttered at random. To make things worse, one of the young men present composed on the spot some satirical verses on the dancers; as we all know, no provincial ball is complete without some such display of wit. These verses were immediately ascribed to Tchitchikov. The indignation grew, and in different corners, ladies began to speak of him in the most unflattering terms; while the poor schoolgirl was completely doomed, and sentence had already been passed on her.

Meanwhile a most unpleasant surprise was in store for our hero. While the young lady was

yawning and he was telling her various incidents that had occurred to him at various times, and even referred to the Greek philosopher Diogenes, Nozdryov appeared from the furthest room. Either he had torn himself from the refreshment room, or had come, possibly of his own free will, or more probably from being ejected, from the little green drawing-room where the play was more fast and furious than ordinary whist. Anyway, he appeared in the liveliest spirits, hanging on to the arm of the prosecutor, whom he had probably been dragging along with him for some time, for the prosecutor was twitching his thick eyebrows in all directions, as though trying to find a way of escape from this over-affectionate arm-in-arm promenade. It certainly was insufferable. Nozdryov, who had sipped inspiration with two cups of tea, not of course unaccompanied by rum, was pouring out the most fabulous tales. Seeing him in the distance, Tchitchikov at once resolved to make a sacrifice, that is, to leave his enviable position and to beat a retreat as quickly as possible : he foresaw nothing good from this meeting. But, as ill-luck would have it, that moment the governor turned up, and expressing the utmost pleasure at having found Pavel Ivanovitch, detained him by asking him to arbitrate between him and two ladies with whom he had been arguing whether women's love were lasting or not ; and meanwhile Nozdryov had seen him and came straight towards him.

‘ Ah, the Kherson landowner, the Kherson land-

owner!' he shouted, as he came up, and he went off into a guffaw so that his cheeks, fresh and red as a spring rose, shook with laughter. 'Well? have you bought a lot of dead souls? I expect you don't know, your Excellency,' he bawled, addressing the governor, 'he deals in dead souls! Upon my word! I say, Tchitchikov! Let me tell you, I say it as a friend, we are all your friends here, and here is his Excellency too—I'd hang you, upon my soul, I would!'

Tchitchikov did not know whether he was standing on his head or his feet.

'Would you believe it, your Excellency,' Nozdryov went on, 'when he said to me, "Sell me your dead souls," I fairly split with laughing. As I came along, I was told he had bought three millions worth of serfs to take to a settlement. Fine settlers! But he was bargaining with me for dead ones. I say, Tchitchikov: you are a beast, upon my soul, you are a beast! Here's his Excellency here too . . . isn't he, prosecutor?'

But the prosecutor and Tchitchikov and the governor himself were thrown into such confusion, that they could not think of anything to say; and meanwhile Nozdryov made a half-tipsy speech without taking the slightest notice of them.

'I say, old boy, you, you . . . I won't let you alone till I find out what you are buying dead souls for. I say, Tchitchikov, you really ought to be ashamed, you know yourself you have no better friend than me. . . . And here's his Excellency here too . . . isn't he, prosecutor?'

You wouldn't believe, your Excellency, what friends we are. It's the simple fact, if you were to say—with me standing here, if you were to say: "Nozdryov, tell me on your honour, which is dearer to you, your own father or Tchitchikov?" I should say "Tchitchikov." Upon my soul . . . Let me imprint a *baiser* on your cheek, love. You will allow me to kiss him, your Excellency. Yes, Tchitchikov, it's no use your resisting, let me imprint one little *baiser* on your snow-white cheek!

Nozdryov was so violently repulsed with his *baisers* that he was almost thrown to the floor. Every one drew away from him and would hear no more. But still what he had said about the purchase of dead souls had been uttered at the top of his voice and accompanied by such loud laughter that it had attracted the attention even of persons sitting at the furthest ends of the room. This piece of news was so astounding that it left every one with a sort of wooden, stupidly interrogative expression. Tchitchikov noticed that many of the ladies glanced at each other with a spiteful, sarcastic smile, and in the expression of several countenances there was something ambiguous which further increased his confusion. That Nozdryov was a desperate liar was a fact known to all, and there was nothing to be surprised at in hearing the wildest fabrication from him, but mortal man—it really is difficult to understand what mortal man is made of; however silly a piece of news may be, so long as it is news, every

mortal immediately passes it on to another, if only to say: 'Just think what lies people are putting about!' And the other mortal listens eagerly, though he too will say afterwards: 'Yes, that's a perfectly silly lie, not worth noticing!' And thereupon he sets off to look for a third mortal, in order that after telling the story he may exclaim with righteous indignation: 'What a silly lie!' And it will certainly go the round of the whole town and all the inhabitants, every one of them, will discuss it till they are sick of it, and will then admit that it's not worth noticing and too silly to think of.

This apparently nonsensical incident unmistakably upset our hero. However stupid a fool's words may be, they are sometimes enough to upset a sensible man. He began to feel uncomfortable and ill at ease, exactly as though with highly polished boots he had stepped into a filthy, stinking puddle—in short, it was nasty, very nasty. He tried not to think of it, he tried to turn the current of his thoughts, to distract his mind, and sat down to whist, but everything went awry like a crooked wheel: twice he revoked, and forgetting that one should not trump in the third place, threw away his whole hand and spoilt his game by his foolishness. The president simply could not understand how Pavel Ivanovitch, who had such a good and, one might say, subtle understanding of the game, could make such blunders and had even trumped his king of spades, in whom, to use his own expression, he had

trusted as in God. Of course the postmaster and the president and even the police-master bantered our hero, asking whether he was in love, and declaring that Pavel Ivanovitch's heart had been smitten, and that they knew from whom the dart had come; but all that was no comfort to him, though he did his best to laugh and turn it off with a joke. At supper, too, he was not able to recover himself, although the company at the table was agreeable and Nozdryov had been ejected some time before, for even the ladies had observed that his conduct was becoming extremely scandalous. In the middle of the cotillion, he had sat down on the floor and clutched at the skirts of the dancers, which was really beyond anything to use the ladies' expression.

The supper was very lively; all the faces, flitting to and fro before the three-stemmed candlesticks, the flowers, the sweets and the bottles, were beaming with the most spontaneous satisfaction. Officers, ladies, gentlemen in dress coats—everything was polite to mawkishness. The gentlemen jumped up from their chairs and ran to take the dishes from the servants to offer them with rare adroitness to the ladies. One colonel handed a lady a plate of sauce on the tip of his drawn sword. The gentlemen of respectable age, among whom Tchitchikov was sitting, argued loudly, absorbing a few words about business with the fish or the beef, which was ruthlessly smothered in mustard. They discussed the very subjects in which he was always interested; but he was like a man

wearied or knocked up by a long journey who has not an idea in his head and who is not capable of entering into anything. He did not even stay to the end of supper, but went home much earlier than he generally did.

There in the little room so familiar to the reader, with the chest of drawers blocking up one door, and the cockroaches peering out of the corners, his mind and his soul were as uncomfortable as the easy-chair on which he was sitting. There was an unpleasant confused feeling in his heart; there was an oppressive emptiness in it. 'Damnation take all those who arranged that ball!' he said to himself in anger. 'What were they so pleased about in their foolishness? The crops have failed and there is dearth in the province, and here they are all for balls! A fine business! they dress themselves up in their feminine rags! It's a monstrous thing for a woman to waste a thousand roubles on her trappings! And of course it's at the expense of the peasants' earnings or what's worse still, of the consciences of our dear friends. We all know why a man takes a bribe and overcomes his scruples: it's to get his wife a shawl or robes of some sort, plague take them, whatever they are called! And what for? That some low woman shouldn't say that the post-master's wife was better dressed, and bang goes a thousand roubles because of her. They cry out, "A ball, a ball! delightful!" A ball's a silly rubbishy thing, it's not in the Russian

spirit, nor true to the Russian nature; what the devil is one to make of it? A grown-up man, getting on in years, suddenly skips in, all in black, as trim and tight as a devil, and sets to working away with his legs. Even while they are standing in couples, a man will begin talking to another about something of importance, and all the while his legs will be capering to right and to left like a goat. . . . It is all apishness, apishness! Because a Frenchman is as childish at forty as he was at fifteen, we must be the same! Yes, really, after every ball one feels as though one had committed a sin and does not like to think of it. One's head is as empty as it is after talking to one of these society gentlemen. He talks about everything, touches lightly on everything, he says everything he has filched out of books brightly and picturesquely, but he hasn't got anything of it in his head; and you see afterwards that a talk with a humble merchant who knows nothing but his own business but does know that thoroughly and by experience, is better than all these chatter-boxes. Why, what do you get out of this ball? Come, suppose some writer were to take it into his head to describe all that scene just as it was. Why, it would be just as senseless in a book as it is in nature. What was it, moral or immoral? God knows what to make of it! You would simply spit and shut the book.'

Such were Tchitchikov's unfavourable criticisms of balls in general; but I fancy that there was partly another reason for his indignation. His

chief vexation was not with the ball, but with the fact that he had happened to come off rather badly at it, that he had been made to look like goodness knows what, that he had played a strange and ambiguous part at it. Of course, looking at it as a sensible man, he could see that it was all nonsense, that a foolish word is of no consequence, especially now when his chief business was successfully concluded. But—strange is man : he was deeply mortified at being in disfavour with the very people whom he did not respect, and whose vanity and love of dress he derided. This annoyed him all the more because when he analysed the matter clearly, he saw that he was to some extent himself to blame. He was not, however, angry with himself, and there, of course, he was quite right. We all have a little weakness for sparing ourselves, and we try to find some neighbour on whom to pour out our vexation, for instance, our servant, our subordinate at the office who turns up at the moment, our wife, or even a chair which is sent flying, goodness knows where, right against the door, so that its arms and back are broken—let it have a taste of one's wrath, one feels. So Tchitchikov soon found some one on whose shoulders to throw everything his vexation suggested to him. This was Nozdryov, and it is needless to say that he came in for a storm of abuse, for a storm of abuse such as is only poured on some rogue of a village elder or driver by some experienced captain on his travels, or even by a general who, to the many expressions

that have become classical, adds others unfamiliar, for the invention of which he can claim the credit. All Nozdryov's kith and kin came in for abuse, and many members of his family were severely dealt with.

But while our hero was sitting in his hard armchair, troubled by sleeplessness and his thoughts, and vigorously cursing Nozdryov and all his relations, while before him glowed a tallow candle with a black cowl of soot on the wick, which threatened every minute to go out, while the blind, dark night, on the point of turning blue with the approaching dawn, looked in at the window, and in the distance cocks were crowing to one another, and in the slumbering town perhaps some poor fellow of unknown class and rank in a fustian overcoat trudged along knowing nothing of aught but the highway, too well worn (alas!) by the vagabonds of Russia—at that very moment an event was taking place at the other end of the town that was destined to increase the unpleasantness of our hero's position. To be precise, a strange equipage, for which it is puzzling to find a name, was creaking through the further streets and alleys of the town; it was not like a coach, nor a carriage, nor a chaise, but it was more like a full-cheeked rounded melon on wheels. The cheeks of this melon, that is the doors, which bore traces of yellow paint, shut very badly owing to the rickety condition of the handles and locks, which were tied up with string. The melon was full of

cotton cushions in the shape of pouches, rolling-pins and simple pillows, stuffed up with sacks of bread, fancy loaves, doughnuts and pasties, and bread rings made of boiled dough. Chicken pies and salt-fish pies peeped out at the top. The footboard was occupied by an individual of the flunkey order, with an unshaven chin, slightly touched with grey, in a short jacket of bright-coloured homespun — the sort of individual known as a ‘fellow.’ The clank and squeaking of the iron clamps and rusty screws woke a sentry at the other end of the town, who picking up his halberd shouted half awake at the top of his voice: ‘Who goes there?’ but seeing that no one was passing, and only hearing a creaking in the distance, caught a beast of some sort on his collar, and, going up to a lamp-post, executed it on the spot with his nail, then laying aside his halberd, fell asleep again in accordance with the rules of his chivalry. The horses kept falling on their knees, for they had not been shod, and evidently the quiet cobbled streets of the town were unfamiliar to them. This grotesque equipage, after turning several times from one street into another, at last turned into a dark side-street next the little parish church of St. Nikolay, and stopped before the head priest’s gate. A girl clambered out of the vehicle, wearing a short warm jacket, with a kerchief on her head, and beat on the gate with both fists as though she were beating a man (the ‘fellow’ in the bright-coloured homespun jacket was afterwards dragged down

by his legs, for he was sleeping like the dead). Dogs began barking, the gates yawned, and at last, though with difficulty, swallowed up this uncouth monster of the road.

The carriage drove into the narrow yard which was filled up with stacks of wood, poultry-houses and sheds; a lady alighted: this lady was no other than Madame Korobotchka. Soon after our hero's departure, the old lady had been overcome by such anxiety as to the possibility of his deceiving her, that after lying awake for three nights in succession she made up her mind to drive into the town, regardless of the fact that the horses were not shod, hoping there to find out for certain what price dead souls were going for, and whether she had not—God forbid—made a terrible blunder by selling them at a third of their proper price. The effect produced by this incident may be understood by the reader from a conversation which took place between two ladies. This conversation—but this conversation had better be kept for the following chapter.

CHAPTER IX

IN the morning, earlier than the hour usually fixed for calls in the town of N., a lady in a smart checked cloak darted out of the door of an orange-coloured wooden house with a mezzanine and blue columns. She was escorted by a footman in a livery coat, with many collars and gold braid on his round, shining hat. With unusual haste the lady at once skipped up the lowered steps of a carriage that stood at the door. The footman instantly slammed the carriage door, pulled up the steps and catching hold of a strap at the back of the carriage, shouted to the coachman: 'Off!' The lady was taking with her a piece of news she had only just heard, and was conscious of an irresistible longing to communicate it as soon as possible. She was every minute looking out of the window and seeing to her unspeakable vexation that they had only gone half-way. Every house seemed longer than usual; the white almshouse with its narrow windows seemed interminable, so that at last she could not resist saying: 'The confounded building, there is no end to it.' Already twice the coachman had received the order: 'Make haste, make haste, Andryushka! You are insufferably slow to-day.' At last the goal was reached. The carriage stopped before

a dark grey wooden house of one storey, with little white bas-reliefs above the windows, and high trellis fences just in front of the windows, and a narrow little front garden, in which the slender trees were always white with the dust of the town that covered their leaves.

In the windows could be seen pots of flowers, a parrot swinging in a cage and holding the ring in its beak, and two lap-dogs asleep in the sun. In this house lived the lady's bosom friend. The author is extremely perplexed how to name these ladies in such a way as to avoid exciting an outburst of anger, as he has done in the past. To call them by a fictitious surname is dangerous. Whatever name one thinks of, in some corner of our empire—well called great—some one is sure to be found bearing it, and he is bound to be not slightly but mortally offended, and will declare that the author has secretly paid a visit to the neighbourhood on purpose to find out what he is like, and what sort of a sheepskin he wears, and what Agrafena Ivanovna he visits, and what he likes best to eat. As for speaking of them by their rank in the service, God forbid, that is more dangerous still. All grades and classes now are so mortally sensitive, that everything they find in a book seems to them a personality: apparently this sensitiveness is in the air. It is enough to say that in a certain town there is a stupid man—even that is a personality: a gentleman of respectable appearance will pop up at once and cry out, 'Why, I am a man too, so

it seems I am stupid'; in fact he perceives at once what is meant. And so in order to avoid all this I will call the lady to whom the visit was made, as she was almost unanimously called in the town of N., that is, a lady agreeable in every respect. She had gained this appellation quite legitimately, for she certainly spared no effort to be obliging in the extreme, although of course through that amiability there stole a glimpse of—oh! what a swift rush of femininity!—and even in her most agreeable phrase would be thrust—oh! what a sharp pin! And God forbid that she should be moved to fury against some one who had somehow poked herself in some way in front of her. But all this would be wrapped up in the most refined politeness such as is only found in provincial towns. Every movement she made was with good taste, she was even fond of poetry; and could hold her head pensively, and every one agreed that she really was a lady agreeable in every respect.

The other lady, that is, the visitor, had not a character so many-sided, and so we will call her the simply agreeable lady. The arrival of the visitor woke the dogs that were sleeping in the sun: shaggy Adèle, always entangled in her own coat, and thin-legged Potpourri. Both began describing circles with their tails in the hall where the visitor, divested of her cloak, appeared in a dress of fashionable design and colour with long streamers from her neck; a scent of jasmine was wafted all over the hall. As soon as the

lady agreeable in all respects heard of the arrival of the simply agreeable lady, she ran out into the hall. The ladies grasped each other's hands, kissed each other and screamed as schoolgirls scream on meeting again after a holiday, before their mothers have managed to explain to them that one is poorer and of a lower rank than another. The kiss was a noisy one, for the dogs began barking again, and were flicked with a handkerchief for doing so, and both of the ladies went off into the drawing-room, which was, of course, pale blue, with a sofa, an oval table and even a little screen with ivy climbing up it; shaggy Adèle and tall Potpourri on his slender legs ran in after them growling. 'This way, this way, sit in this corner!' said the lady of the house, installing her friend in the corner of the sofa. 'That's right, that's right, and here is a cushion for you.' Saying this, she stuffed a cushion in behind her, on which there was a knight worked in wool, as such figures always are worked on canvas, with a nose looking like a ladder and lips forming a square. 'How glad I am that it's you. . . . I heard some one drive up and I wondered who it could be so early. Parasha said, "It's the vice-president's lady," and I said, "There, here's that silly creature come to bore me again," and I was on the point of telling them to say I was not at home.'

The visitor was meaning to communicate her piece of news without delay, but an exclamation uttered at that instant by the lady agreeable in all respects gave another turn to the conversation.

‘What a sweet bright little print!’ exclaimed the lady agreeable in all respects, looking at the dress of the simply agreeable lady.

‘Yes, it is very sweet, but Praskovya Fyodorovna thinks it would have been nicer if the checks had been smaller, and if the spots had been pale blue instead of brown. I sent my sister a piece of material: it was so absolutely fascinating, it’s simply beyond all words. Just fancy, narrow, narrow little stripes, beyond anything the human fancy can imagine, and a pale blue ground, and all over the stripes, spots and sprigs, spots and sprigs, spots and sprigs . . . in fact quite unique! One may really say there has never been anything like it in the world.’

‘My dear, that’s too gaudy!’

‘Oh no, it’s not gaudy!’

‘Oh, it must be gaudy.’

It must be noted that the lady who was agreeable in all respects was something of a materialist, disposed to doubts and scepticism, and there were a great many things she refused to believe in.

Here the simply agreeable lady protested that it was not at all gaudy, and exclaimed: ‘Oh, I congratulate you, flounces are not to be worn.’

‘Not worn?’

‘Little festoons are coming in instead.’

‘Oh, that’s not nice—little festoons!’

‘Little festoons, it’s all festoons: a pelerine made of festoons, festoons on the sleeves, epaulettes of little festoons, festoons below and festoons everywhere.’

‘It’s not nice, Sofya Ivanovna, if it’s all festoons.’

‘It’s sweet, Anna Grigoryevna, you would never believe how sweet. It’s made with two seams, there are wide armholes, and above . . . but now, now you will be astonished, now you will say . . . well, you may wonder: only fancy, the waists are longer than ever, coming down to a point in front, and the front busk is more extreme than ever; the skirt is gathered all round just as in the old-fashioned farthingale, they even stick on a little padding at the back to make you quite a *belle-femme*.’

‘Well, that really is . . . I must say!’ said the lady who was agreeable in all respects, tossing her head with a sense of her own dignity.

‘Yes, precisely so; I must say!’ answered the simply agreeable lady.

‘Do what you like, I shall never follow that fashion.’

‘I feel just the same. . . . Really, when you come to think what extremes fashion will sometimes go to . . . it’s beyond anything! I asked my sister to send me the pattern just for fun; my Melanya undertook to make it.’

‘Why, have you actually got the pattern!’ cried the lady agreeable in all respects, with a perceptible throbbing of her heart.

‘Yes, my sister brought it.’

‘My darling, do let me have it, for the sake of all that’s holy.’

‘Oh, I have already promised it to Praskovya

Fyodorovna. When she has done with it, perhaps.'

'Who is going to wear it after Praskovya Fyodorovna? It is very odd on your part to put strangers before your friends.'

'But you know she is my own cousin.'

'A queer sort of cousin, only on your husband's side. . . . No, Sofya Ivanovna, you needn't talk to me; it seems you want to put a slight upon me. . . . It's clear that you are tired of me; I see you want to give up being friends with me.'

Poor Sofya Ivanovna did not know what to do. She felt she had put herself between the devil and the deep sea. That is what comes of bragging! She felt ready to bite off her silly tongue.

'Well, what news of our charming gentleman?' the lady agreeable in all respects asked.

'Ah, my goodness! Why am I sitting here like this! What an idea! Do you know what I have come to you about, Anna Grigoryevna?' Here the visitor took a deep breath, the words were ready to fly like hawks one after another out of her mouth, and no one less inhuman than her bosom friend could have been so ruthless as to stop her.

'You may praise him up and say all sorts of nice things of him,' she said with more vivacity than usual, 'but I tell you straight out and I will tell him to his face, that he is a good-for-nothing fellow, good-for-nothing, good-for-nothing.'

‘But only listen to what I have to tell you. . . .’

‘They spread rumours that he was a nice man, but he is not a nice man at all, not at all, and his nose is . . . a most unattractive nose.’

‘Do let me, do let me only tell you . . . my love, Anna Grigoryevna, let me tell you! Why it’s a scandal, do you understand: it’s a story, *skonapel eestwah*,’ said the visitor in a voice of entreaty, with an expression almost of despair. I may as well mention that the ladies introduced many foreign words into their conversation, and sometimes whole French sentences. But great as is the author’s reverence for the inestimable benefits conferred by the French language on Russia, and great as is his respect for the praiseworthy custom in our aristocratic society of expressing themselves at all hours in that language, entirely, of course, through their love for their fatherland, yet he cannot bring himself to introduce sentences in any foreign language into this Russian poem. And so we will continue in Russian.

‘What story?’

‘O my precious Anna Grigoryevna! If you could only imagine the state I am in! Only fancy, Father Kirill’s wife came to see me this morning, and what do you think? Our visitor who seems so meek, he is a fine one, isn’t he?’

‘What, do you mean to say he has been making advances to the priest’s wife?’

‘Ah, Anna Grigoryevna, if it were no worse than that, that would be nothing. Just listen

to what she told me. She says that Madame Korobotchka, a lady from the country, came to her, panic-stricken and pale as death, and told her a tale, such a tale! Only listen, it's a regular novel: all at once at dead of night when every one was asleep there came a knock at the gate more awful than anything you could imagine; there was a shout of "Open, open, or we'll smash open the gate!" . . . What do you think of that? He's a charming fellow after that, isn't he?'

'And what's this Korobotchka like? Is she young and good-looking?'

'Not at all, she's an old lady.'

'Oh, how charming! So he's after an old lady? It speaks well for the taste of our ladies; they have pitched on a nice person to fall in love with.'

'Well no, Anna Grigoryevna, it's not at all as you suppose. Only imagine, he makes his appearance armed to the teeth like some Rinaldo Rinaldini, and demands: "Sell me all your souls that are dead." Korobotchka answers him very reasonably, saying: "I can't sell them because they are dead." "No," he said, "they are not dead, they are mine, it's my business to know whether they are dead or not," says he. "They are not dead, not dead," he shouts, "not dead!" In fact he makes a fearful scene; all the village rushes up, the children cry, everybody is shouting, no one can make out what's the matter, it was simply an *horreur, horreur, horreur!* . . . You

simply can't imagine, Anna Grigoryevna, how upset I was when I heard all this. "Mistress darling," my Mashka said to me, "look in the looking-glass and see how pale you are." "Don't talk to me of looking-glasses," said I, "I must go and tell Anna Grigoryevna." I instantly ordered the carriage to be brought round; my coachman Andryushka asked me where to drive and I couldn't speak a word, I simply stared in his face like a fool; I do believe he thought I had gone mad. Oh, Anna Grigoryevna, if you could only fancy how upset I was!

'It certainly is odd,' said the lady agreeable in all respects. 'What can be the meaning of these dead souls? I can't make it out, I must own. This is the second time I have heard of these dead souls; though my husband still declares that Nozdryov's lying, there must be something in it.'

'But just fancy, Anna Grigoryevna, what a state I was in when I heard of it. "And now," Korobotchka says, "I don't know," she says, "what I'm to do. He made me sign some forged document, threw down fifteen roubles in notes; I am a helpless and inexperienced widow," she says, "I know nothing about it. . . ." You see what things are happening! If you could only imagine how upset I am!'

'But, say what you like, it's not a question of dead souls, there's something behind all this.'

'I confess I think so too,' the simply agreeable lady pronounced, not without surprise, and was

instantly aware of an intense desire to find out what it could be that was behind it. She even articulated hesitatingly: 'Why, what do you suppose is behind it?'

'Well, what do you think?'

'What do I think? I must own I am completely at a loss.'

'All the same, I should like to know what you think about it.'

But the agreeable lady could think of nothing to say. She was only capable of being upset, but was quite incapable of forming a coherent hypothesis, and that is why she, more than most, stood in need of tender affection and advice.

'Well, let me tell you what's the meaning of these dead souls,' said the lady agreeable in all respects, and at these words her visitor was all attention; her ears seemed to prick up of themselves, she rose up in her seat, scarcely touching the sofa, and though she was a somewhat solid lady, seemed to grow slimmer, and as light as a feather which might fly off into the air at a puff of wind.

So when a hare, startled by the beaters, darts out of the forest, the sportsman with his horse and his riding whip is suddenly like powder waiting for the match to be applied. He gazes into the murky air and is already with faultless aim striking at the beast, has already slain it, however the whirling snowy steppe may rise up against him, scattering silvery stars on his lips,

his moustache, his eyes, his brows, and on his beaver cap.

‘The dead souls . . .’ pronounced the lady agreeable in all respects.

‘Well, well!’ cried her visitor, all excitement.

‘The dead souls!’ . . .

‘Oh, speak, for God’s sake!’

‘They are simply a cover, but this is what he is really after: he is trying to elope with the governor’s daughter.’

This conclusion was indeed utterly unexpected and in every way extraordinary. The agreeable lady, on hearing it, was simply petrified, she turned pale, she turned pale as death, and certainly was upset in earnest. ‘Oh dear!’ she cried, clasping her hands, ‘that I never should have supposed!’

‘But as soon as you opened your mouth, I saw what was in the wind,’ answered the lady who was agreeable in all respects.

‘Well, what is one to think of boarding-school education after this, Anna Grigoryevna! So this is their innocence!’

‘Innocence, indeed! I have heard her say such things as I could not bring myself to repeat!’

‘It’s heartrending, you know, Anna Grigoryevna, to see what lengths depravity can go to.’

‘And the men are all wild over her, though for my part I must own I can see nothing in her. . . . She is insufferably affected.’

‘Ah, my precious, Anna Grigoryevna! she’s

a statue, if only she had a little expression in her face.'

'Ah, how affected she is! Ah, how affected! My goodness, how affected! Who taught her to behave like that I don't know; but I have never seen a girl give herself such airs.'

'My darling, she is like a statue and deathly pale.'

'Oh, don't talk to me, Sofya Ivanovna, she rouges shamelessly.'

'What do you mean, Anna Grigoryevna? she is like chalk, chalk, simply chalk.'

'My dear, I was sitting beside her, the rouge was as thick as my finger and kept peeling off like plaster. The mother has set her an example; she is a coquette and the daughter is worse than the mother!'

'Oh, excuse me, come, I'll swear by anything you like, I'll wager my children, my husband, all my property this minute, if there is a single drop, a grain, a shadow of rouge upon her!'

'Oh, what are you saying, Sofya Ivanovna!' said the lady agreeable in all respects, and she clasped her hands.

'Oh, what a woman you are, Anna Grigoryevna, really! I wonder at you!' said the agreeable lady, and she too clasped her hands.

The reader must not be surprised that the ladies were not agreed about what they had both seen almost at the same moment. There are indeed many things in the world, which have the peculiar property of appearing absolutely white

when one lady looks at them, and as red as a cranberry in the eyes of another.

‘Well, here’s another proof for you that she is pale,’ the agreeable lady went on. ‘I remember as though it were now, how I was sitting beside Manilov and said to him: “Just look how pale she is.” Any one must be as senseless as our gentlemen here to be so fascinated by her. And our charming gentleman . . . How hateful I thought him! You can’t imagine, Anna Grigoryevna, how hateful I thought him.’

‘Yet there were ladies who were quite taken with him.’

‘I, Anna Grigoryevna? No, you can never say that, never, never!’

‘But I am not talking about you, as though there were nobody but you.’

‘Never, never, Anna Grigoryevna! Allow me to tell you what I know myself very well indeed! Perhaps there may have been something on the part of some ladies who give themselves out as so unapproachable.’

‘I beg your pardon, Sofya Ivanovna! Allow me to tell you that there has never been any scandalous gossip about me. About any one else, perhaps, but not about me, allow me to tell you.’

‘What are you taking offence for? There were other ladies there, you know, such as those who made a rush for the chairs by the door so as to sit near him.’

It might have seemed inevitable that a storm should follow these observations of the agreeable

lady, but, marvellous to relate, both ladies suddenly subsided and nothing whatever followed. The lady agreeable in all respects remembered that the pattern of the new fashion was not yet in her possession, and the simply agreeable lady reflected that she had not yet succeeded in extracting any details of the affair that her bosom friend had just revealed to her, and so peace was very quickly restored. It could not be said, however, of either of the ladies that the desire to make herself disagreeable was characteristic; indeed there was nothing spiteful in their disposition, it was simply that in conversation a slight inclination to stick pins in one another sprang up of itself unconsciously. It was simply that each derived some slight gratification from slipping in a sharp word at the expense of the other, as much as to say: 'That's one for you!' 'Take that to yourself!' There are all sorts of impulses in the hearts of the feminine as well as of the masculine sex.

'The only thing I can't understand, though,' said the simply agreeable lady, 'is how Tchitchikov, a stranger in these parts, could venture to attempt such an audacious proceeding. There surely must be others implicated in the affair.'

'Why, did you suppose there were not?'

'Why, who do you think can be assisting him?'

'Well, Nozdryov anyway.'

'Nozdryov! really?'

'Why, it is just in his line. You know that he tried to sell his own father, or worse still, staked him at cards.'

‘ Oh dear, what interesting things you tell me ! I never could have imagined that Nozdryov was mixed up in this affair.’

‘ I always took it for granted.’

‘ Really, the things that do happen in the world, when you come to think of it ; who could have supposed when Tchitchikov first came among us, do you remember, that he would make such a strange upset in the world. O Anna Grigoryevna, if only you knew how upset I feel ! If it were not for your friendship and affection . . . I should really be on the brink of despair. What are we coming to ! My Mashka saw I was as pale as death ; “ Mistress, darling ! ” said she, “ you are as pale as death.” “ Mashka,” I said, “ I can’t think of that now.” What a thing to happen ! So Nozdryov’s in it ! Well I declare !’

The agreeable lady was very eager to hear further details concerning the elopement, that is, at what o’clock it would take place and so on, but she wanted too much. The lady agreeable in all respects professed her entire ignorance of all this. She was incapable of lying : to assume the truth of a supposition was a different matter, but even then the supposition must be founded on her inner conviction ; if she were conscious of an inner conviction she was quite capable of defending her position, and any lawyer renowned for his power of turning other people’s opinions might have tried his powers on her and he would have seen what an inner conviction means.

That both ladies were in the end fully con-

vinced of what they had at first assumed as a mere supposition is nothing out of the way. We learned people, as we call ourselves, behave in almost the same way, and our learned theories are a proof of it. At first our savants approach them in almost a cringing spirit, they begin timidly, discreetly, they begin with the humblest suggestion: 'Is not this the origin? Does not such a country derive its name from such and such a spot? or, 'Is not this document connected with another of a later period?' or, 'Should we not take such and such a people to mean this or that other people?' He immediately quotes such and such ancient writers, and if he can only detect a hint or what he takes for a hint, he grows audacious and confident, talks to the writers of antiquity without ceremony, asks them questions and himself supplies the answers, quite forgetting that he had begun with a timid hypothesis; he soon fancies that he sees it, that it is clear, and his argument is concluded with the words, 'This is how it was: so this is the people that is meant by this name! This is how we must look at the subject!' Then it is proclaimed to all from the platform—and the newly discovered truth is sent on its travels round the world, gathering to itself followers and disciples.

While the two ladies were so cleverly and successfully interpreting this intricate affair, the public prosecutor with his invariably immobile face, his thick eyebrows and winking eyelid,

walked into the room. The ladies vied with each other in explaining the whole episode, they told him of the purchase of the dead souls, and of the plot to carry off the governor's daughter, and completely bewildered him, so that in spite of his standing on the same spot winking with his left eye, and flicking his beard with his handkerchief to brush off some snuff from it, he was utterly unable to make head or tail of it. And so the two ladies left him standing and went each on her way to rouse the town. They succeeded in carrying out this enterprise in a little over half an hour. The town certainly was roused; everything was in a ferment and no one knew what to think. The ladies succeeded in throwing such a mist over the eyes of every one, that all, and especially the officials, were for a time completely overwhelmed. They found themselves for the first moment in the position of a schoolboy whose schoolfellows have thrust a twist of paper full of snuff up his nose while he is asleep. Breathing up all the snuff with the energy of sleep, he wakes and jumps up, looks about him like an idiot with his eyes starting out of his head and cannot grasp where he is, what has happened to him, and then recognises the walls lighted up by the slanting rays of the sun, the laughter of his companions hiding in the corners, and glancing out of window, sees the early morning with the awakening forest resounding with the notes of a thousand birds, and the shining river, lost here and there in gleaming zigzags among the slender reeds, and dotted

with naked boys calling each other to bathe—and last of all perceives what has been put in his nose.

Such was exactly the position of the inhabitants and officials of the town for the first moment. Each one of them stood like a sheep with his eyes starting out of his head. Dead souls, the governor's daughter and Tchitchikov were mixed together in the strangest confusion in their brains ; and only later on, after the first stupefaction had passed, they began as it were to disentangle and separate them, they began to demand explanations and to be vexed, seeing that the affair refused to become intelligible. 'What is the meaning of it really, what is the meaning of these dead souls ? There is no sense in dead souls, how can one buy dead souls ? Who would be such a fool as to accept them ? And queer sort of money one would pay for them ! And to what purpose, to what use could dead souls be put ? And why is the governor's daughter mixed up in it ? If he wanted to elope with her, why should he buy dead souls ? If he wanted to buy dead souls, why should he run away with the governor's daughter ? Does he want to make her a present of these dead souls or what ? What nonsensical stories they do spread about the town. What are things coming to when you can hardly turn round before there is some scandal going about you, and not a word of sense in it either. . . . The story is going about though, so there must be some reason for it. What reason could there be

for dead souls? There is positively no reason for it. It's all fiddlesticks, nonsense rhymes, soft-boiled boots! It's simply the deuce! . . .' In short, the discussions were endless, and all the town was talking of dead souls and the governor's daughter, of Tchitchikov and dead souls, of the governor's daughter and Tchitchikov, and everything was in a stir. The town that till then had been wrapped in slumber was boiling like a whirlpool. All the sluggards and lazybones who had been for years lounging at home in dressing-gowns, abusing the shoemaker for making their boots too narrow, or the tailor or the drunken coachman, crept out of their holes; all who had dropped all their acquaintances years ago and whose only friends, to use the popular expression, were Mr. Slugabed and Mr. Sleepyhead (characters as well known all over Russia as the phrase, 'visiting Mr. Snooze and Mr. Snore,' which signifies to sleep like the dead on the side, or the back, or in any other position to the accompaniment of snoring, wheezing and so on); all those who could not have been lured out of their houses even by an invitation to taste a fish soup costing five hundred roubles, with sturgeon six feet long, and all sorts of fish-pasties which melt in the mouth, turned out now; in fact it seemed as though the town were busy and important and very well populated. A Sysoy Pafnutevitch and a Makdonald Karlovitch who had never been heard of before appeared in public. A long lanky gentleman with his arm in a sling, taller than

any one who had been seen before, was conspicuous in the drawing-rooms. Closed chaises, unfamiliar wagonettes, all sorts of turn-outs, rattling and squeaking, appeared in the street—and there was soon a fine to-do. At another time and under other circumstances, such rumours would perhaps not have attracted attention, but it was a long time since the town of N. had heard any news at all. In fact for the last three months there had not been in the town of N. what in Petersburg is called *Commérages*, which, as we all know, is as important for a town as the van that brings its provisions. Two quite opposite points of view were at once apparent in the discussions in the town, and two opposing parties, masculine and feminine, were immediately formed. The masculine party, the more irrational, concentrated their attention on the dead souls. The feminine party were completely absorbed by the abduction of the governor's daughter.

To the credit of the ladies, in the latter party there was far more discipline and watchfulness. It was evidently their vocation to be good managers and organisers. With them everything soon took a vivid, definite shape, and clothed in clear and distinct forms, was explained and classified, and the result was a finished picture. It appeared that Tchitchikov had been in love for months, and that they used to meet in the garden by moonlight, that the governor would have given his consent to the match as Tchitchikov was as rich as a Jew, had it not been for his wife, whom

he had abandoned (how they had learned that Tchitchikov was married no one could say), and that his wife, who was broken-hearted and hopelessly in love with him, had written the most touching letter to the governor, and that Tchitchikov, seeing that the father and mother would never give their consent, had determined on an elopement. In other houses the story was told a little differently: that Tchitchikov had not a wife at all, but as a subtle man, who liked to be sure of his ground, he had, in order to win the daughter, begun by laying siege to the mother, and had a secret amour with her, and that he had made a proposal for the hand of the daughter; but the mother, horrified at the thought of so criminal and impious a proceeding, and suffering from pangs of conscience, had refused point blank, and this was why Tchitchikov had planned an elopement. Many variations and additions were tacked on to this, as the rumours penetrated into the more remote corners of the town. In Russia, the lower ranks of society are very fond of discussing the scandals that take place among their betters, and so all this began to be talked about in little houses in which no one had ever set eyes on Tchitchikov, or knew anything about him, fresh complications were added and further explanations were made. The subject became more interesting every minute, and took a more definite form every day, and at last was brought to the ears of the governor's wife herself in its final shape. As the mother of a family, as the

leading lady in the town, as a lady in fact quite unsuspecting of anything of the sort, she was deeply wounded by this tittle-tattle, and was moved to an indignation which was, indeed, perfectly justified. The poor schoolgirl had to endure one of the most unpleasant interviews to which a girl of sixteen has ever been exposed. A perfect torrent of questions, inquiries, upbraidings, threats, reproaches, admonitions were poured out, so that the girl burst into tears, sobbed, and could not understand a word. The porter received the strictest orders never on any pretext or under any circumstances to admit Tchitchikov.

Having done their duty by the governor's wife, the ladies attacked the men's party, trying to bring them over to their side, and maintaining that the dead souls were a mere pretext only made up to avert suspicion and to enable the elopement to be carried out more successfully. Many of the men were brought over and joined the ladies' party, although they were exposed to severe censure from their fellows, who called them old women and petticoats—names, as we all know, most insulting to the male sex.

But in spite of the defence and resistance put up by the men, there was by no means the same discipline in their party as in the women's. With them everything was crude, unpolished, inharmonious, untidy and poor; there was a discordance, a chaos, an incoherence, a muddle in their thoughts—in fact it exemplified the worthless

character of man, his coarse dense nature, incapable of domestic management, and of genuine convictions, lacking in faith, slothful, always full of doubts and everlasting apprehensions. They said that this was all nonsense, that eloping with the governor's daughter was more in a hussar's line than in a civilian's, that Tchitchikov would not do that, that women talked nonsense, that a woman was a sack—she would swallow anything; that the important point to take notice of was the purchase of the dead souls, and what the devil that meant there was no saying, though there was certainly something very nasty and unpleasant about it. Why the men thought there was something very nasty and unpleasant about it we shall learn immediately. A new governor-general had been appointed for the province, an event as every one knows that always throws the local officials into great perturbation: it is invariably followed by dismissals, reprimands, punishments, and the various official treats with which higher officers regale their subordinates. 'Why,' thought the local officials, 'if he finds out that these stupid rumours are going about the town, his fury may be a matter of life and death.' The inspector of the medical board suddenly turned pale: he imagined, God knows why, that the words 'dead souls' might be a reference to the patients, who had died in considerable numbers in the hospitals and infirmaries of an epidemic fever, against which no proper precautions had been taken, and that Tchitchikov might have been sent by

the governor-general to gather secret information. He mentioned this to the president of the court. The president answered that this was absurd, and then grew pale himself, as he wondered whether the souls bought by Tchitchikov were really dead, and he had allowed the deed of purchase to be drawn up and had even acted for Plyushkin in the matter, and if this were to come to the governor-general's knowledge, what would happen? He did no more than mention this to one or two others, and those one or two others instantly turned pale too; fear is more contagious than the plague and is instantly communicated. They all discovered in themselves even sins they had not committed. The phrase 'dead souls' was so vaguely suggestive, that they began to suspect that there might be in it an allusion to corpses buried in haste, in consequence of two incidents which had occurred not long before. The first incident was connected with some merchants who had come from another district to the fair and, after selling their goods, had given to other merchants a banquet on the Russian scale with German concoctions: orgeats, punches, balsams and so on. The banquet ended as usual in a fight. The merchants who gave the entertainment beat their guests to death, though they suffered violent treatment at their hands, blows in the ribs, in the pit of the stomach and elsewhere, that testified to the size of the fists with which nature had endowed their deceased opponents. One of the successful party had his

'beak broken off' as the combatants expressed it, that is, his nose so completely smashed, that there was not more than a half finger's breadth left on his face. At their trial the merchants pleaded guilty, explaining that they had had just a drop. There were rumours that while on their trial they had offered four imperial notes each to the judges. The case was very obscure, however; from the inquiry and the report that was made, it appeared that the merchants had been suffocated by charcoal fumes and as such they were buried. The other event, which had taken place only recently, was as follows: the Crown peasants of the village of Vshivaya-Spyess in conjunction with the Crown peasants of the village of Borovka, otherwise Zadirailovo, were accused of having made away with the rural police in the shape of one Drobyazhkin, a tax assessor; it was said that the rural police, that is Drobyazhkin, had taken to visiting their village with excessive frequency, which in some cases is as bad as a pestilence, and the reason of his doing so was that the 'rural police,' having a weakness for the fair sex, ran after the village girls and women. This was not known for certain, however, though in their evidence the peasants plainly stated that the 'rural police' was as wanton as a tom-cat, and that they had lain in wait for him more than once and on one occasion had kicked him stark naked out of a hut where he lay hidden. The 'rural police,' of course, did deserve to be punished for his amatory propensities. But the peasants of

both villages were on their side, too, certainly guilty of taking the law into their own hands, that is, if they really committed the murder. But the facts were not clear. The 'rural police' was found on the road, the uniform or coat on the 'rural police' was nothing but a rag, and even his face was unrecognisable.

The case went through the local courts and was brought at last before the high court, where it was at first deliberated on in private, to this effect: since it was not known which of the peasants had taken part in the crime, and since there were many of them; since Drobyazhkin was dead, so that it would not be much advantage to him, even if he did win the case, while the peasants were still alive, so that a decision in their favour was very important for them, it was therefore decided that Drobyazhkin was himself responsible, since he had been guilty of oppressive treatment of the peasants, and that he had died in his sledge of an apoplectic stroke. The case, it would seem, had been neatly settled; but the officials, for some inexplicable reason, began to think that these were the dead souls in question.

As ill luck would have it, just when the officials were in this difficult position, two communications to the governor arrived at the same time. The first informed him that, from evidence and reports received, it appeared that a forger of counterfeit notes was in their province, concealed under various aliases, and that a very strict search was

to be made at once. The other was a despatch from the governor of a neighbouring province, and was concerned with the escape from justice of a brigand, and directed that if any suspicious person who could not produce a passport or give a good account of himself were to be found in the province, he was to be at once arrested. These two documents had a shattering effect on every one. Their previous conclusions and surmises were completely checkmated. Of course it could not be supposed that there was any reference to Tchitchikov; all of them, however, as they pondered, each from his own point of view, realised that they did not know what sort of man Tchitchikov was, that he had been very vague in his account of himself, that he had indeed said that he had suffered in the cause of justice, but that was all very indefinite, and when they remembered at the same time that he had actually said that he had many enemies who had attempted his life, they wondered all the more: his life, then, was in danger; he was, then, being pursued; so he must have done something. . . . And who was he in reality? Of course it could not be thought that he had forged counterfeit notes and still less that he was a brigand—his appearance was most respectable; but with all that, what sort of person could he be? And now the officials asked themselves the question which they ought to have asked themselves in the first chapter of my poem. It was decided to make inquiries of the persons from whom the dead souls had been

bought, so as to find out at least what sort of transaction it was, and what was to be understood by dead souls, and whether he had not perhaps explained to some one casually in some chance word what was his real intention, and whether he had not told some one who he really was. First of all they went to Madame Korobotchka, but they did not get much out of her: he had bought them, she said, for fifteen roubles and was going to buy poultry feathers too, and had promised to buy a great many things, to take fat pork for a government contract, and so he was certainly a rogue, for she had a fellow before buy poultry feathers and fat pork for the government, and he took every one in and cheated the head priest's wife out of a hundred roubles. Everything else she said was almost a repetition of the same thing, and the officials gathered nothing from it but that she was a foolish old woman. Manilov replied that he was ready to answer for Pavel Ivanovitch as for himself, that he would give his whole estate for a hundredth part of Pavel Ivanovitch's good qualities, and altogether used the most flattering expressions of him, adding some reflections in regard to friendship, while his eyes almost closed with emotion. No doubt these reflections satisfactorily explained the tender emotions of his heart, but they threw no light on the matter in question. Sobakevitch replied that in his opinion Tchitchikov was a good man, and that he had sold him peasants to be settled in another province, and they were

living in every respect ; but that he could not answer for what would happen in the future, that if they were to die during transportation from the hardships of the journey, it would not be his fault, that was in God's hands, and that there were plenty of fevers and dangerous illnesses, and that there were instances of whole villages dying of them at once. The official gentlemen had recourse to one other method which was not perfectly honourable perhaps, but which is however sometimes employed, that is, through various acquaintances in the servants' quarters to question privately Tchitchikov's serfs, and to find out whether they knew anything of their master's past life or circumstances : but again they got very little. From Petrushka they got nothing but the smell of a stuffy room, while from Selifan they heard that : ' he was engaged in the Imperial Service, and before that was in the Revenue Department '—and nothing more. Persons of this class have a very strange habit. If they are asked a direct question they are utterly unable to remember anything, cannot put their thoughts in order, and even answer simply that they do not know, but if they are questioned about something different, they immediately complicate it with ever so many details that you do not want to hear. All the investigations made by the officials revealed to them nothing but that they did not know what Tchitchikov was, and at the same time that Tchitchikov certainly must be something. They resolved at last to

discuss the subject thoroughly, and to decide at least what they were to do, how they were to act and what steps they were to take, and what he was precisely, whether he was the sort of person who was to be seized and detained as a suspicious character, or whether he was the sort of person who might seize and detain all of them as suspicious characters. To do all this it was proposed to meet together at the house of the police-master, who is already known to the reader as the father and benefactor of the town.



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